

FOOD IS

GREAT

BRITAIN

A guide
for international media
Edition 3 - June 2014

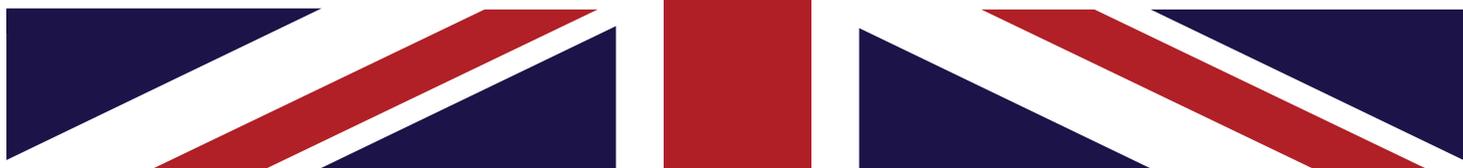
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*Afternoon Tea
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Quick facts about Britain's Food

- Pubs come in all shapes and sizes in Britain - some even hold a Michelin star for the quality of their food, while others are all Organic. *Read about great gastropubs to write about on p9*
- You can perch high above Edinburgh at Scottish-Thai restaurant Chaophraya and take in spell-binding views of the city, including famous Edinburgh Castle. *Read about restaurants with a view on p22*
- It's now possible to eat in a prison in Wales, up a treehouse in Northumberland and down in the London Underground. *Explore some unusual places to dine on p25*
- David Beckham loves pie, mash and liquor at Tony's Pie and Mash Shop in Essex - find out about other delicious and beloved regional specialities on p32
- Foraging is in fashion! There are lots of places in Britain you can source your own unique supper - *read how and where on p42*
- Vegetarians will find a cornucopia of eating options in Britain. *Explore the wealth of meat-free options on p45*
- Gluten-free no longer means no choice - there are 'free-from' restaurants, cafes and tea rooms all over Britain. *Read about some of the best on p47*
- Ethics is on the menu at the many green-minded eateries in Britain. *Read about where to dine without harming your environment on p50, sustainable destination restaurants on p53 and organic restaurants on p56*
- Jason Atherton, Mark Wilkinson and Emily Watkins are tipped to be the chef stars of the future. *Find out about the ones to watch in the culinary world on p62*
- Want a cocktail with a twist - not just of lemon? Try molecular cocktails in a maze-like setting at Bohemia in Brighton. *Read about other quirky cocktail bars on p64*
- Dry bars have popped up in London, Liverpool and Nottingham - with Newcastle and Brighton next in line to get them. *Read about alcohol-free hangouts on p71*
- You can sample whisky from the teapot on Glasgow's 'Teapot Tipple' tour! *Read about whisky experiences to write home about on p72*
- Vines have been growing in England and Wales for nearly 2000 years - and our wine's being recognised with awards and accolades. *Read about it on p75*
- You can make your own craft beer in London and Glasgow, or else try a brew-infused oyster, or chocolate beer sorbet. *Join the craft beer revolution on p78*
- World Gin Day is celebrated on 14 June. *Read about the many gin experiences on offer in Britain on p80*
- Black Cow Vodka is the world's first pure milk vodka, made in rural Dorset. *Drink it at Mark's Bar in Soho. Read about more micro-distilled marvels on p85*
- You can master the art of serving afternoon tea, learn to bake perfect bread or to 'pimp your profiteroles' on a cookery course in Britain! *Read about them on p99*
- Street food in Britain ranges from oysters by the sea to creamy curries in the Cotswolds - *read about gourmet bites to grab on the go on p112*

Food is GREAT - why?

The food scene in Britain has undergone a major renaissance in the last couple of decades - long gone are the days when Britain was most famous for its big breakfasts and endless cups of tea. These days the destination is home to hundreds of Michelin-starred restaurants and boasts chefs whose faces are known the world over.

On a more local level, visitors to the nation's coastlines and countryside will find fresh, seasonal produce available to buy and sample at farmers' markets, or enjoy at cosy gastropubs and restaurants; while committed foodies will be spoilt for choice on food trails, cookery schools and at food festivals held in charming surroundings.

It's not just British food that visitors can enjoy though, as the nation is home to the rest of the world's kitchens. Excellent Indian cuisine, bustling Chinatowns in many cities, authentic Italian, Spanish and Jamaican fare and newer additions like Peruvian cuisine add to the multitude of flavours on offer.

Food fashions

Britain leads the way with food trends, be it the demand for local, seasonal produce where every kitchen worth its salt now has an eye on sustainability (the two Michelin star L'Enclume in Cumbria, north-west England, has established its own farm to furnish its diners with hyper-fresh produce - see our story on sustainable restaurants on page 53) or the rise of vegetarian restaurants (see our story on p45). We have street food-only restaurants (p114) as well as fantastic street food on the street (! - see p112); there are plenty of interesting drinks stories too, from learning about craft beer (see p78) to the rise and rise of gin's popularity (p80), as well as the increase in the opening of 'dry bars' (p71).

Holidays for real 'foodies'



Foodie - and drink - heaven at the annual Ludlow Food Festival

Anyone who likes to eat well on holiday won't be disappointed by their choice of Britain as a destination. For those keen to experience the best in taste, there are plenty of specific 'foodie destinations' not to miss, from the historically delicious market town of Ludlow in Shropshire, to Abergavenny in Wales; its annual food festival is world-renowned. Food festivals are a joyous way to celebrate food, music and new places and there is a packed calendar of events - particularly in summer and autumn - well worth making a date in the diary for when you're planning a trip to Britain.

See p17 for iconic foodie destinations and p120 for the lowdown on food festivals in 2014; on p118 we have rounded up the food festivals devoted to a single ingredient - all hail the garlic bulb!

Best of British

Just as Britain is noted for its architectural and cultural heritage, it is also well-known for its food history. There are 48 regional foods from all parts of Britain that hold 'Protected Food Name' (PFN) status, giving consumers guaranteed quality and authenticity, and giving food-lovers a reason to let their taste-buds dictate their travel plans and discover

delicious, uniquely British produce. Melton Mowbray - home of the world-famous pork pie and Stilton cheese - now receives over two million tourists a year who come simply to see where and how these foods are made, and to taste them today in the town where they were originally created many centuries ago. See p32 for Britain's regional specialities and p125 for an A-Z of British dishes and produce.

The pub - not just beer and crisps, but home to some of Britain's best eating options

Prior to the 1990s the pub was just a venue for drinking, with peanuts, crisps and 'ploughman's lunches' (cold meats, cheese and bread) making up most of the menu. Nowadays it's harder to find a pub just serving drinks, as the rise of the 'gastropub' - a term wedding 'gastronomy' to the pub - has made the institution a well-respected food destination. The Eagle pub in Clerkenwell, London, is credited with first coining the term in 1991; more than 20 years later, the Hand and Flowers in Buckinghamshire (south-east England), was awarded two Michelin stars, a first in Michelin history and proving the significance of pubs on the British food scene.

See p9 for Great Gastropubs and p12 for some really quite quirky pubs.

There's also been a significant rise in the availability of craft beers in Britain's pubs; Britain's range of artisan beers, made by small, independent brewers, is fast expanding and we show you how to enjoy the craft beer experience on p78.

Famous food - the rise and rise of the celebrity chef

Jamie Oliver, Gordon Ramsay, Heston Blumenthal, Nigella, Marco Pierre White - internationally renowned names and faces who have shaken up the food scene in Britain and are widely recognised from their regular TV appearances. Experience their creations for yourself (see p60), plus meet the rising stars on the British culinary scene; chefs that will soon be recognised the world over (p62).

Drink up!

It's not all about eating in Britain! Discover why Scotland's whisky is globally prized by



Tenterden Vineyard Park, Kent

hearing how it's made by those who make it and find out how to make the most of the whisky experience. Across in Northern Ireland, the Old Bushmills Whiskey Distillery, a stone's throw from the UNESCO world heritage site the Giant's Causeway, continues to distil some of the best Irish Whiskey available. Or see how England's vineyards are enjoying international recognition for their wines. Those in Kent and Sussex are the most lauded so far, and the 'Garden of England' (as Kent is known) is an ideal place to discover new

tastes, explore picture-perfect landscapes and visit National Trust properties and gardens on a relaxing tour. Plus you can even stay at some vineyards meaning a wine-tasting course can be enjoyed to the max! And of course there's plenty to discover at cocktail hour, including molecular cocktails and 'bring your own' cocktail clubs! Find out more on p64.

More on whisky on p72 and English and Welsh wine on p 75.

Breakfast and brunch

For years, we have called it the most important meal of the day. You will not need to travel far in Britain to find a delicious breakfast to set you up for a day's sightseeing and exploration. By breakfast, we often mean a hearty selection of eggs, sausage and/or bacon, with possible additions including baked beans, tomatoes, black pudding and fried bread.

Around the destination, you may find even more exotic components, for we offer a huge variety for the make-up of what is widely known as the Full English breakfast. With national variations you may be served a Full Welsh, Scottish or Northern Ireland's version, the Ulster Fry. At weekends restaurants provide even more variety as many of us enjoy brunch, a later meal closer to midday; our cosmopolitan tastes mean anything goes as we look to American and European favourites such as pancakes or eggs Benedict. Here's a look at some good breakfast spots around Britain.

Good for a treat:

The Wolseley, London



The Wolseley - one of the most famous London spots for breakfast

This restaurant located in central London's Piccadilly provides the ultimate luxury breakfast. In elegant surroundings where you can often spot celebrities and politicians, take your pick of pastries made on the premises, order a proper Full English breakfast or classic egg dishes. It's an experience so exquisite that the high-profile journalist AA Gill wrote a book about it. Reservations essential. www.thewolseley.com

Getting there: The nearest Underground stations are either Green Park and Piccadilly.

The Regency, London

This exemplary old-school "caff", as locals call it (a colloquialism for café), is close to the Houses of Parliament in Westminster and Tate Britain in Pimlico; that means it's popular with politicians and art lovers.

All kinds of fried food can be ordered, which is then offered up with a gruff shout. Its distinctive chessboard tiles may be familiar as The Regency is a regular TV and film backdrop; it has appeared in *Layer Cake* and *Brighton Rock*.

Getting there: The nearest Underground station is Pimlico.

Good for families:

St Werburghs Café, Bristol, south-west England

In a wooden structure that looks like it has grown rather than been built, this award-winning café is part of a city farm in Bristol's bohemian St Werburgh's district. The staff are friendly and relaxed, serving wholesome food, including bacon from the farm's own pigs. There is also an adventure playground next door for young ones to work up an appetite. www.swcityfarm.co.uk

Getting there: Bristol is just under two hours by train from London.

River Cottage Café, Devon, south-west England

TV chef Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall has done as much as anyone to popularise the use of local, seasonal produce, something put into practice at this bustling outpost near his Devon headquarters and close to this part of England's scenic coast. From the open kitchen come such delights as smoked Chesil kippers, Dorset mushrooms on toast and dropped scones with honey.

www.rivercottage.net/canteens/axminster

Getting there: The River Cottage Café is located in Axminster, just under three hours from London by train.

The Lifebuoy Café, Fowey, Cornwall, south-west England

Pronounced "Foy", Fowey is a charming historic harbour town on Cornwall's rugged south coast with bobbing boats, stunning estuary views and this fine establishment. The Lifebuoy prides itself on sourcing local produce - sausages and the Cornish speciality hogs pudding from the town butcher, plus eggs from a nearby farm. www.thelifebuoycafe.co.uk

Getting there: The nearest train station is Par, a four-hour journey from London, with bus links to Fowey.

Good for road trips:

Tebay Services, Cumbria, north-west England

Motorway service stations are usually noted for convenience rather than quality, however this independent outpost on the motorway M6 near the Lake District takes things up a level. It is owned by a local farming enterprise, so you can be certain the rashers in your bacon 'butty' (sandwich) are of good quality. Despite being open 24 hours a day, standards remain high. www.tebayservices.com

Getting there: The services are located between Junctions 38 and 39 on the M6.

Fusion Organic Café, Sheffield, south Yorkshire

This atmospheric spot is fittingly based in a former cutlery factory (its South Yorkshire home was famous for its steel) and its heart belongs to organic food. Much of its produce is sourced locally and the operation offers training to catering students. However, come for the bread - fresh from a baker that is part of the same crafts centre.

www.academyofmakers.co.uk/fusion-cafe.html

Getting there: Sheffield is a three-hour drive from London, or just over an hour's drive from Manchester.

Good for late risers:

Urban Angel, Edinburgh, Scotland

There are two branches of this sleek operation that serve brunch until 17.00; it's an excellent choice to suit all appetites from healthy smoothies and muesli to fry-ups, with all produce showcasing the finest Scottish ingredients. Plus there is that Scottish staple, oatmeal porridge with honey, to give you a glow when there is a chill in the air.



Breakfast at The River Café in Devon is satisfying and seasonal

www.urban-angel.co.uk

Getting there: Edinburgh is around four and a half hours from London by train.

Milgi, Cardiff, Wales

Now 100% meat-free with vegan options, you can be sure vegetarians get more than second-class fare at this popular gallery and café bar. If you can wait until its 11.00 opening, treat yourself to the likes of French toast with vanilla-poached pears, Mexican-style corn pancakes or home-made baked beans. www.milgilounge.com

Getting there: Cardiff is just over two hours from London by train.

Good for purse-friendly options:

Causeway Café, Belfast, Northern Ireland

A proper Ulster Fry should mean you can skip lunch and that is certainly the case at this world-famous establishment that specialises in the province's signature breakfast. What differentiates this fry-up is the distinctive Northern Irish breads - griddled soda bread and potato farls - to accompany the usual fried egg, sausage, bacon, tomato and beans. You'll get all this for less than £5, with complimentary tea and coffee thrown in.

www.causewaycafe.co.uk

Getting there: Belfast is around an hour and a quarter flying from London.

Gourmand-lovers' Gastropubs

Many of the following suggestions come from The Good Pub Guide, a well-respected guide for people interested in exploring the best pubs in Britain that is well worth checking out. Search www.thegoodpubguide.co.uk to find pubs recommended by the experts, wherever you are visiting in Britain.

1. The Applecross Inn, Applecross, Scotland

One of the country's most remote pubs, the Applecross is reached by a spectacular drive, especially if timed to coincide with sunset. Once up at the pub, you'll be rewarded with top-quality fish and seafood and excellent local ales - or you could go totally Scottish and have the haggis flamed in Drambuie. www.applecross.uk.com

Getting there: It'll take about five hours to drive to Strathcarron in Ross-shire from Edinburgh, but it's worth it once you arrive and seemingly shed the rest of the world behind you!

Nearby: A great area for trekking, or you can head over the stretch of water to the Isle of Skye, one of Britain's most spectacular islands, with its rugged scenery, castles and cosy pubs.

2. The Duke of Cambridge, London

The first and only certified organic pub in Britain, and not only is the food organic, it's delicious and hearty, describing its style as 'British food with Mediterranean influences'. The menu changes twice daily and all food - from the bread to the pickles to the ice cream - is made at the restaurant. <http://sloeberry.co.uk>

Getting there: Angel Tube station.

Nearby: Islington is a lovely neighbourhood to wander around - stroll Upper Street between Angel and Highbury and Islington Tube stops - and take in independent boutiques and cafés, veering off to explore the many hidden neighbourhood squares in Barnsbury.



Duke of Cambridge Organic pub makes all food on site

3. The Hand and Flowers, Buckinghamshire, south-central England

Winner of two Michelin stars, the pub serves French and British cuisine, with fillet of Lancashire beef a popular choice and crispy pig's head the starter of choice for carnivores. Discover lots of fish on the menu too. www.thehandandflowers.co.uk



Two Michelin stars means The Hand and Flowers is a popular choice

Getting there: NB: The Hand and Flowers has a long waiting list for tables, and you may need to reserve months ahead. The Hand and Flowers is in Marlow, best reached by car (about one hour's drive from London) or by train to Marlow.

Nearby: It's near the village of Bray, another foodie's dream destination, which has The Fat Duck and Hind's Head - Heston Blumenthal-run establishments - as well as The Waterside Inn.

4. The Hardwick, Abergavenny, south-east Wales



An organic kitchen garden ensures fresh local produce is on the menu at The Hardwick

Set in Welsh foodie hotspot, Abergavenny, the Hardwick prides itself on an extensive menu that will keep even the most seasoned locals coming back to try something new. The food is truly local, with much of it emanating from the organic kitchen garden. Sample dishes include roast shoulder of local Brecon lamb with new season garlic, Wye Valley asparagus, seasonal greens and a Pink Fir apple potato & lamb hotpot or River Teign mussels on bruschetta with marinier sauce, pancetta and mustard chantilly. www.thehardwick.co.uk

Getting there: *The Hardwick is about three hours from London by car, or just under an hour from Cardiff.*

Nearby: *The hotel has rooms, but you can also follow its advice (on website) for places to stay nearby, to explore the Black Mountains in the Brecon Beacons, or else Herefordshire across the border in England, whose beautiful countryside is also worth a visit.*

5. The Rose & Crown, Romaldkirk, Northumbria, north-east England

It's a real foodie treat to stay at the Rose & Crown, which serves food so local they can even tell you the name of the chicken that laid your eggs! The setting of this 18th-century coaching inn is cosy, the welcome warm and the food superb and imaginative, including many homemade jams, pickles, chutneys and ice-creams. www.rose-and-crown.co.uk

Getting there: *It's best to drive to this pub, just over one hour from Newcastle or under an hour from Durham. Trains run from London to Darlington (a two-and-a-half-hour journey) and it's then a 20-minute taxi ride.*

Nearby: *The magnificent Bowes Museum is very close by, as is Raby Castle. Nature lovers should explore the area, which has great walks as well as the impressive High Force waterfall. Hadrian's Wall country is not far, and the city of Durham is well worth visiting or staying in, to admire the UNESCO World Heritage protected Durham Cathedral and cosy tea shops and vintage shopping stores.*

6. The Griffin at Felin Fach, Powys, south Wales

The Griffin's motto is 'simple things in life done well'. The pub offers the delights of the Welsh larder, with local ingredients used as much as possible, including many from their own kitchen garden. Once you've eaten, sleep it off on a four-poster bed in the tranquil Welsh countryside. Sister inns are The Gurnard's Head and The Old Coastguard, both in Cornwall, south-west England. www.felinfachgriffin.co.uk

Getting there: *The Griffin is about a three-hour drive from London or an hour from Cardiff. You can take the train to Abergavenny but it's then a 40-minute drive - cars can be hired from the station.*



The kitchen at the Felin Fach, south Wales, uses ingredients from its own garden

Nearby: *The pub is perfect for exploring the Brecon Beacons, spending a day walking The Black Mountains to earn your dinner. Or else you can head into the surrounding market*

towns, including Hay on Wye, which is famous for its book festival and a year-round hotspot for anyone who likes to while away an afternoon in second-hand bookshops and tearooms.

7. The Gunton Arms, Norfolk, east England

When The Gunton Arms was voted Pub of the Year 2013 in the Michelin Eating Out in Pubs guide, this was just one of the many rave reviews it has received. Set on the edge of a 1,000-acre deer park in Norfolk, it's best to make a night of it if you can and stay overnight in the lovely rooms. Mark Hix, one of Britain's top chefs, advised on the menu and the kitchen is run by two of his alumni, serving hearty and rich dishes, like deep-fried cod cheeks and venison grill. Art lovers would also be happy here; the pub is run by art dealers and the walls are therefore covered in conversation-starting artworks, including some by Tracey Emin. www.theguntonarms.co.uk

Getting there: *Gunton station, which connects with Norwich, is a mile away (London to Norwich: two hours). It's easiest to explore Norfolk with a car, or else on a boat on The Broads waterways.*



Great food, amazing views at Cornwall's The Old Coastguard. Credit Paul Massey

Nearby: *There's a lot to explore around the area, including National Trust properties Blickling Hall and Felbrigg, seal watching at nearby Blakeney, the Norfolk Broads to the south and the seaside, including Holkham Beach (which featured in the final scenes of Shakespeare in Love) are not far by car. Gunton is a short drive from North Norfolk's picturesque seaside town of Cromer.*

8. The Old Coastguard, Cornwall, south-west England

A picturesque Cornish village makes the perfect setting for this pub, which has a marvellous garden leading out to rock pools on the edge of an old fishing village. If you want home-made bread, jams and marmalades, with plenty of fresh fish on the menu, look no further. www.oldcoastguardhotel.co.uk

Getting there: *Daytime services to Penzance generally take five hours from London Paddington or four hours from Bristol. The drive from London takes around five hours.*

Nearby: *The pub is at Penzance, a beautiful and quintessentially English coastal town where you can stroll by the sea or explore the rolling hills and ancient Celtic monuments in the Cornish countryside.*

9. The Holly Bush, Hampstead, London

A cosy and historic pub in beautiful Hampstead that packs its customers in under the wooden-beamed ceilings and among authentic Edwardian gas lamps for delicious traditional pub food: pies (seafood, vegetable, meat), roasts and excellent ales. Book a table, especially on the weekend. <http://hollybushhampstead.co.uk>

Getting there: *Hampstead Tube station*

Nearby: *you can either build up your appetite or walk off your meal at Hampstead Heath, one of London's most beautiful and well-loved green spaces.*

10. The Trout, Oxford, south-central England

One of the most picturesque spots for a summer lunch, but cosy in the winter too, The Trout at Tadpole Bridge was voted Oxfordshire Dining Pub of the Year 2013. The food is delicious, with some unusual and inventive dishes, but it's the atmosphere that makes it special. Hire a punt to go down the Thames, order a champagne picnic hamper and lie on the grass, or just gaze over the river in one of the country's most spectacular spots. www.trout-inn.co.uk

Getting there: The pub is a 25-minute drive from Oxford and around two hours from London.

Nearby: The Trout is located between the villages of Buckland and Bampton, the perfect gateway to exploring the Cotswold region and quintessential English village life.

Bampton is a must for Downton Abbey fans, as it was the scene of the wedding in the third series, as well as where the characters go to send telegrams at the Post Office. It's also well worth visiting the university city of Oxford, with its centuries-old colleges and quaint cobbled streets.



The Trout's beautiful location complements its inventive food.

Quirky pubs

Ever wanted to go to the tallest pub in Britain? The smallest? Or how about the most haunted?!

Oldest

Ye Olde Trip to Jerusalem, Nottingham in central England, claims to be England's oldest inn, built in 1189, and is unique in that it is half built into the sandstone rock beneath



Enjoy a drink surrounded by spectacular views at Yorkshire's Tan Hill Inn

Nottingham's famous Castle. But The Fighting Cocks in St Albans, Hertfordshire, south-east England, currently holds the official *Guinness Book of Records* title, an 11th-century structure on an 8th-century site. And Norfolk's The Adam and Eve in Norwich, east England, was first recorded in 1249, when it was an alehouse for the workers constructing nearby Norwich Cathedral.

www.triptojerusalem.com

www.adamandevenorwich.co.uk

Highest

Tan Hill, Yorkshire - Britain's highest pub, located in the north of England, boasts the highest Wi-Fi hotspot for

free Internet and email access. Located on the Pennine Way long-distance footpath.

www.tanhillinn.com

Smallest

Is it the Nutshell in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, east England - its bar measures 4.5m by 2.1m (15ft by 7ft) - or The Fiddichside Inn, Craigellachie, north-east Scotland, whose public bar

measures about 3m by 4.5m (10ft by 15ft). Neither has enough room for any tables, only bar stools and a couple of benches. www.thenutshellpub.co.uk

Most remote

The Old Forge, on Knoydart peninsula, on the west coast of Scotland: with no roads in or out, an 18-mile hike over Munros or a seven-mile sea crossing, the pub is 'the remotest on mainland Britain' according to the *Guinness Book of Records*. The other end of Britain, you can also get a boat to the Pandora Inn, near Truro in Cornwall, south-west England, parts of which date back to the 13th century; it's not difficult to believe that little has changed since that time. You can take an Aquacab from nearby Falmouth. www.theoldforge.co.uk, www.pandorainn.com

Literary drinking

In Oxford, central England, The Eagle and Child and The Trout claim literary heroes among their past customers. The former was used by an Oxford writers' group, the Inklings, which included C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien and was where Lewis distributed proofs for *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. The Trout was also popular with C. S. Lewis, as well as with Lewis Carroll, before becoming immortalised on the Morse TV series.

The Globe Inn, Dumfries, south-west Scotland, established in 1610, has long been associated with Robert Burns, Scotland's national poet. In 1796, Burns wrote: '... the Globe Tavern here, which these many years has been my Howff ...', and in 1819, the first of what was to become the annual tradition of Burns Suppers, was held at The Globe Inn. His favourite seat still survives and some of his poetry may still be seen inscribed with a diamond on his bedroom windows.

Browns Hotel in Laugharne, west Wales, is synonymous with Dylan Thomas as his well-known watering hole. The property was Grade II listed in 1966 for its special interest and close historical association with the writer. The building's hotel reopened in 2012, and is themed in the style of the 1950s to reflect the time when Dylan Thomas sat in the bar with his favourite pint.

www.nicholsonspubs.co.uk/theeagleandchildoxford

www.thetroutoxford.co.uk

www.globeinndumfries.co.uk

www.browns-hotel.co.uk



Drink where Dylan Thomas once supped beer, at Browns Hotel, Wales

Haunted

The Mermaid Inn in Rye (in Sussex, south-east England) dates back to 1156 and featured on TV for its spirits (not the alcoholic kind): it has a strong connection with the notorious Hawkhurst Gang of smugglers, who used it in the 1730s and 1740s as one of their strongholds. Some of the smugglers, their mistresses and other characters are reported to haunt the inn.



The Plough and Harrow in south Wales is said to be the oldest pub in the country

The Drovers Inn in Inverarnan, by Ardlui, western Scotland is famously haunted, and customers have spotted Old George,

a cattle drover, and a little girl who are all said to haunt the inn.

The Grenadier, in Mayfair, London, is reported as haunted by an officer who was flogged to death after being caught cheating at cards.

The Plough and Harrow in Monkash, south Wales, dates back to 1383, which means it vies for the title of the oldest pub in Wales. It has tales of the 'Wreckers of Wick' who tied lanterns to sheep roaming the cliffs to tempt ships onto the rocks: the pub bar was used to store bodies from the wrecks so a number of ghosts are said to haunt the place.

www.mermaidinn.com, www.thedroversinn.co.uk, <http://ploughandharrow.org>

Best toilets!

The Philharmonic Dining Rooms pub, Liverpool, north-west England, is a 'dazzling Art Nouveau pub where the men's lavatory is so spectacular that women are invited to view it'. Visited by John Lennon, it is so named because it is opposite the Philharmonic Hall.

www.nicholsonspubs.co.uk/thephilharmonicdiningroomsliverpool

Ten pub walks

Britain is famous for its cosy, historic, gourmet pubs, with plenty of established walks that take in several of these lovely venues along the way. Throw in some beautiful countryside or historic towns as you go and you've got a gorgeous day - or two! - of scenery, heritage and first-rate food and drink!

Kent, south-east England

Kent is known as the Garden of England - and you'll see why on this nine mile/14km walk. You'll start at Faversham - 90 minutes by train from London. A short bus ride takes you to Sheldwich and, from here you'll walk through rich farmland and apple orchards. The newly-reopened White Lion pub at Selling is a great place to stop off for lunch and a pint of locally brewed beer. Head on through Perry Wood - an area of outstanding natural beauty - and continue to the Rose & Crown pub. This 16th-century pub serves local food - and even wine - as well as beer; Kent is famous for its hops.

www.shepherdneame.co.uk/pubs/faversham/white-lion,
www.roseandcrownperrywood.co.uk.

London

Experience London through a series of its most historic pubs on a guided walk that takes you from London Bridge to Holborn. It often stops at Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese. Just off Fleet Street, in the heart of the city, it's been a hostelry for over nearly years - and doesn't seem to have changed much since author Charles Dickens referred to it in *The Tale of Two Cities* - there's still sawdust on the floor and a series of tiny rooms. For over 18s only, tickets cost £25 including one drinks, £40 including two drinks. www.visitbritainshop.com

Monmouthshire, south-east Wales

There are seven walks to choose from if you base yourself at the Bell pub in the village of Skenfrith - ranging from a gentle two mile/three km stroll to a six mile/9.5km walk with steep climbs. All trails return to this restored coaching inn and its award-winning

restaurant. Using produce from its own kitchen garden and other items sourced from local suppliers - with Sunday roasts alongside lighter dishes - it hasn't forgotten it's a pub at heart - there's a lovely bar. Skenfrith is an hour's drive from Cardiff. www.skenfrith.co.uk

North Yorkshire, north England

One triangular four mile/seven km walk and three stellar pubs in the heart of the Yorkshire Dales. The village of Buckden is a great base - mostly because of the Buck Inn there - a newly refurbished pub with rooms. Its breakfast - a full fry up - will set you up for a trek on the moors across to the hamlet of Cray and the White Lion - stone-flagged floors, hugely popular with walkers and a superb place for a pint or even stay - there are bedrooms too. Then you can head to Hubberholme, where you'll pass a 12th-century Norman church, to The George Inn. Its ploughman's lunches (and



Stop for a Ploughman's Lunch at The George Inn, while taking in the beautiful Yorkshire Dales on foot

a pint of locally-brewed beer) will set you up for the return leg to Buckden. The nearest city is Leeds, just over two hours by train from London. www.thebuckinnbuckden.co.uk, www.thewhitelioncray.com, www.thegeorge-inn.co.uk

Lake District, north-west England

An area packed with great pubs - and superb walks - the two come together especially well around Lake Windermere - just under four hours from London by train. Cross the lake on the Bowness Ferry and from there you start a three-hour walk. Head up to the superb views of Claife Heights, until you reach Far Sawrey and stop off for a drink at the Cuckoo Brow Inn. Further on, at Near Sawrey, you'll find Hilltop - the home of the famous children's writer Beatrix Potter, now owned by the National Trust. There's also Tower Bank Arms - a classic Lakeland pub - a whitewashed stone building that features in Potter's *The Tale of Jemima Puddleduck*. www.cuckoobrow.co.uk, www.towerbankarms.co.uk

Belfast, Northern Ireland

There aren't many pubs that are owned by National Trust - this heritage organisation usually looks after stately homes - but the Crown Liquor Saloon in Belfast is an exception, meaning that its historic gas lights, marbles tiles and ornate bar studded with glass has been lovingly preserved. It's one of the highlights of a walking tour that takes in six classic pubs, such as the Morning Star and the Deer's Head. Many of the pubs feature live music and Belfast's characteristic 'snugs', wooden home-from-homes that encourage you to settle in for the night. The tours take place twice a week from May to October. Tickets cost £8. www.visit.belfast.com



National Trust owned The Crown Liquor Saloon is a highlight on the Belfast Pub walking tour

The Cotswolds, west England

Quaint villages crowned by a series of delightful pubs - the Cotswolds is perfect walking country. And, if you like taking it easily this walk takes about two hours. You'll start at the small, pretty town of Burford and head to your first stop in the Windrush valley, the cosy

17th-century Maytime Inn in Astall. Cross the river and head to the village of Swinbrook and local pub The Swan - sometimes called Britain's poshest pub as it's owned by the Dowager Duchess of Devonshire - but it's not so grand that it doesn't offer great food and a proper pint of beer and its own cider. Need to work off your meal? Head onto Widford and Fulbrook and head back to Burford - where you'll find a host of hostelryes. Try the cosy bar at the Lamb Inn. www.themaytime.com, www.theswanswinbrook.co.uk, www.cotswold-inns-hotels.co.uk

Norfolk, east England

There are no mountains to climb here - Norfolk is a famously flat landscape - and this six mile/9.5km trek is best timed to the tides so you can walk along the beach. You'll start at the posh Victoria gastropub in the village Holkham, which serves breakfast until 11.00; you can stay here too. Then head along the beach where the final scenes of *Shakespeare in Love* were filmed before you hit the Crown at the town of Wells-next-the-Sea and then onto Stiffkey and its Red Lion pub. Set amid the marshes, you'll find great seafood and if you're footsore there are ten eco-minded bedrooms to stay in. The nearest train station is Kings Lynn, about 20 miles away, from which direct trains from London take just under two hours. www.holkham.co.uk/victoria, www.crownhotelnorfolk.co.uk, www.stiffkey.com

Cornwall, south-west England



Cornwall's Gurnard's Head is the ideal end point to a beautiful coastal walk. Photo credit Paul Massey

Discover a two-hour walk along some of Britain's most glorious coastal scenery (around a six-hour train journey from London). Base yourself at the Gurnard's Head on the headland near St Ives - a foodie, family-friendly pub with rooms. After a leisurely breakfast, pick up the footpath towards St Ives where you'll pass disused tin mines as you head inland to Zennor - a village loved by novelist DH Lawrence and where you'll find the historic Tinnars Arms. Built in 13th century, it serves a good selection of local beer and offers a large menu. Return via the small museum at the village of Zennor and its ancient church and across farmland - in time for supper at the Gurnard's Head - you'll find everything from local fish to beef on

the menu.

www.gurnardshead.co.uk, www.tinnarsarms.com

East Neuk of Fife, south-east Scotland

This energetic walk through some of Scotland's prettiest fishing villages takes about four hours - not counting pub stops. You'll start at St Monans, follow the coastal path to Pittenweem. Head into the village for a quick refreshment at the West End Bar & Gantry, then head along the cliffs to Anstruther. There are several pubs to choose from but the route takes you straight past the historic Dreel Tavern - which has a good selection of real ales, as well as great food. Head on past the Caiplie Caves to Crail and its Golf Hotel - dating back to 1721, it's one of Scotland's oldest pubs - a good place to reward yourself with a wee dram of whisky. www.westendbarandgantry.co.uk www.dreeltavern.com, www.thegolfhotelcrail.com

Food destinations for serious lovers of eating

1. Ludlow, Shropshire, west England

Close to the border with Wales, Ludlow is located in the beautiful Shropshire countryside and is, without a doubt, Britain's original 'foodie' destination. The market town still has lively markets most days of the week, as well as lovely speciality food shops and hosts one of the most highly respected food festivals in the country every September.

The Slow Food movement's presence in Britain first began in Ludlow, and though the headquarters have since moved to London, the town retains the laid-back vibes that, along with the food, characterise the movement. Though a fairly small town, it boasts Michelin-starred restaurants Mr Underhills and La Bécasse, as well as the Ludlow Food Centre, where you're guaranteed to be tempted into buying some of the delicious local produce. www.mr-underhills.co.uk, www.labecasse.co.uk

As well as its taste-based charms, Ludlow is worth visiting to explore its heritage, with a magnificent castle and more than 500 listed buildings (many Georgian), making it a beautiful place that will appeal to history buffs as well as foodies. The town of Much Wenlock, where the modern Olympic Games began, is only 30 minutes away by car, worth visiting during its annual Wenlock Olympian Games in the summer.

Getting there: Trains run to Ludlow from Euston and Paddington, and take around three hours.

www.visitsouthshropshire.co.uk has lots of information about places to stay, and other places in the area to visit.

2. Bray, Berkshire, south-east England

Located close to Windsor and right by the Thames is a slice of gourmet paradise that is home to seven Michelin stars and a population of only around 7,500 people. Bray is where you'll find The Fat Duck, Heston Blumenthal's three Michelin-starred restaurant that put snail porridge on the menu and established Blumenthal as one of the quirkiest and most brilliant chefs in the business.

www.thefatduck.co.uk

Heston then took ownership of the Hinds Head in Bray, a 'village pub' that was the location for Prince Phillip's pre-wedding stag party! Queen Elizabeth II has also entertained at the pub. Since Blumenthal took over, the pub has gained a Michelin star, but not through any oddball menu items: British food such as Scotch eggs, shepherd's pie and treacle tart are on offer, and are the ideal way for anyone still sceptical about the quality of British recipes to be proven wrong.

www.hindsheadbray.com



Michelin-star British food is on the menu at Heston Blumenthal's Hinds Head, Bray

The culinary tour continues at The Waterside Inn, located on the banks of the Thames and serving exquisite French food worthy of its three Michelin stars. It's run by renowned chef Alain Roux and the menu is described as 'unashamedly French', with the two-course 'menu

gastronomique' priced at £49.50 through to the 'menu exceptionnel', a taster of around seven dishes, for £155. There's also an a la carte menu. www.waterside-inn.co.uk

Just along the river is the Hand and Flowers pub in Marlow, which became the first pub to win two Michelin stars in 2011. The menu combines British flavours with rustic French dishes using seasonal ingredients, with a traditional roast beef and Yorkshire pudding available on Sundays. www.thehandandflowers.co.uk

Getting there: Reach Maidenhead by train from London Paddington (40-50 minutes) and take a taxi (five to ten minutes).

The Fat Duck's website has an accommodation section, which lists the Hand and Flowers pub, as well as luxury stately home Cliveden House Hotel. www.thefatduck.co.uk/Location

3. Abergavenny, south-east Wales

This picturesque town in Wales becomes a centre for gastronomy each September when its annual food festival is held. *The Observer* Food magazine declared that 'Abergavenny is to food what Cannes is to film', which gives an idea of the festival's importance. The Tuesday market takes place weekly, and is one of the best in Wales, with over 200 stalls inside the impressive market hall and outside, with excellent local produce sold by people passionate about food. Restaurants and pubs in Abergavenny are known for their excellent



Excellent culinary standards at The Walnut Tree, Abergavenny. Credit VisitBritain/Rod Edwards

standards and one, The Walnut Tree (pictured), was described by a British food critic as 'one of the culinary wonders of Wales'. It offers local produce, and has produced a variety of inventive dishes, like sea bass with crab pancake and saffron sauce, and toffee rice pudding with pineapple. In spite of rave reviews, the price manages to reflect a special occasion without being out of the question (starters £8-12, mains £15-25). The excellent Griffin at Felin Fach pub was voted 2013's Inn of the Year, and is only 40 minutes away by car. www.thewalnuttreeinn.com,

www.felinfachgriffin.co.uk/Home.aspx

In addition to the edible attractions, the town is a great base to explore the Brecon Beacons National Park, with the Black Mountains forming a backdrop to the quaint lanes, riverbanks and meadows. History buffs will be interested in the Blaenavon World Heritage Site, a key location in the Industrial Revolution.

There are plenty of cute places to stay, from romantic cottages to boutique hotels. See www.visitabergavenny.co.uk for info.

Getting there: Abergavenny is a 35-40 minute train journey from Cardiff, and takes just under an hour to reach from there by car.



Cheese stall at Borough Market. Credit VisitBritain/Joanna Henderson

4. London

The capital of England has attracted the best chefs, budding top chefs and food lovers for years, and its multicultural character has ensured that a visit to London is a short trip around the world. You can eat well on any budget, visiting lively Brixton market in the south for cheap and tasty Jamaican jerk chicken, or else heading into the City of London for old-fashioned British dishes at Michelin-starred haunt St John of Smithfield. The range in the capital is wide and visitors will be spoilt for choice. A tour with Mind the Gap will take you on a 'tale of two markets: Brixton and Borough, with plenty of edible delights along the way. www.mindthegaptours.com

You can eat well in the city at any time of day, from breakfast at The Wolseley on Piccadilly or else an East End 'greasy spoon'; lunch at one of the many Michelin-starred restaurants offering daytime dining deals, like Restaurant Gordon Ramsay or else buy a picnic from buzzing Borough Market; afternoon tea at 4pm at Fortnum and Mason, or the swanky Claridges; then dinner at... Dinner - Heston Blumenthal at the Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park hotel, or one of the hundreds of other places the city has to offer. www.thewolseley.com, www.gordonramsay.com, www.boroughmarket.org.uk, www.fortnumandmason.com, www.claridges.co.uk, www.dinnerbyheston.com

5. Edinburgh, Scotland

The capital of Scotland's delights are many, from the impressive Edinburgh Castle that looms into view as you chug into the train station, then on to Princes Street, a shoppers' paradise you'll happen upon as soon as you descend from the train; out beyond the main centre is Leith, formerly a chaotic and insalubrious port area and now one of the city's most desirable and trendy districts. None of this can be seen without regular pit-stops to sample the city's fine eateries, Scotland's delicious produce and, of course, the nation's number one drink, whisky.

For high-quality Scottish produce, try The Grain Store, whose venison and lamb is local and served in an intimate dining room that looks out onto the lovely Victoria Street. The Castle Terrace offers mouth-watering contemporary dishes, whose Surprise Tasting menu for £75 is great for the adventurous eater, and should not only surprise but impress (it has received a Michelin star to testify to that). Its kitchen is run by Dominic Jack; prior to the Castle Terrace he worked alongside friend and fellow chef Tom Kitchin. Tom's original Edinburgh restaurant, The Kitchin in Leith, was one of the first places to put the area on the culinary map. If you're out at Leith to climb aboard the Royal Yacht Britannia, ensure you lunch or dine at The Shore, the area by the water and home to some of the city's best eateries. The Ship on the Shore offers superb steamed Shetland mussels and other dishes from the sea, alongside champagne and good wine, making it a memorable place to celebrate an occasion, or just toast a newfound love



Edinburgh; top restaurants, farmer's markets and great picnic destinations. Image available at www.visitbritain.com/media

of Edinburgh.

Edinburgh has numerous restaurants, but also a great Farmer's Market that takes place every Saturday with the imposing backdrop of Edinburgh Castle behind it, at Castle Terrace. Picnic at Princes Street gardens, on perfect pies and gourmet crisps, and also get some of your gift-buying done at the craft and clothing stalls that also set up there.

For whisky, The Scotch Whisky Experience is a great place not only to sample the country's famous drink, but to learn about the many varieties, how they're made and even the myths and legends surrounding the amber liquid. The Amber restaurant on site has a menu of traditional Scottish foods to enjoy before and after sampling a dram or two.

www.grainstore-restaurant.co.uk, www.castleterracerestaurant.com, www.thekitchin.com, www.theshipontheshore.co.uk, www.scotchwhiskyexperience.co.uk

6. Belfast, Northern Ireland



Belfast's MAC is home to one of the UK's top 50 coffee shops

You won't go hungry in Belfast - chances are, you'll be so full after breakfast you don't think you can eat any more...then so tempted by lunch you'll go for it anyway. You've heard of the full English breakfast - fried eggs, bacon, sausages, baked beans, mushrooms and the optional black pudding - well add in some white pudding, soda bread, potato bread, and maybe a slice of Guinness and malt wheaten bread and you've just made it an Irish breakfast. If you want to start the day well, stay the night at the sumptuous Rayanne's guesthouse in the Hollywood district, or else just pop over for brekkie even if you're not staying. In addition to the full Irish, their Gourmet Breakfast menu offers seven starters (including a great chilled creamed porridge) and 13

other mains, including scrambled eggs with crab and French toast topped with Clonakilty black & white pudding with apple compote. www.rayannehouse.com,

Belfast's foodie scene is in full swing, with plenty of places to have a satisfying lunch. Two of the top choices are Italian; Il Pirata and Coppi who have embraced the new trend for 'cicheti' - little tapas style tasters at £6 for three plates. The latter is right by the MAC (Metropolitan Arts Centre), well worth checking out for a dose of art and caffeine - the gallery's café 'Canteen' made it into *The Independent's* 50 best coffee shops in the UK and, if you've room for one, their chocolate scones are a treat too. www.coppi.co.uk

Come dinner time, you're spoilt with options. Highlights include Shu Restaurant on Belfast's fashionable Lisburn Road, which won the 2012 Best Restaurant in Northern Ireland title, famed for its innovative use of top-quality local produce from seafood to Glenarm Shorthorn Beef. There's also the Mourne Seafood Bar, where you can inspect the catch of the day in the shop windowfront and then have locally caught fish and oysters. You can even learn to make it yourself, as the restaurant is also the site of the Belfast Cookery School. www.shu-restaurant.com, www.mourneseafood.com, www.belfastcookeryschool.com

Getting there: You can fly to Belfast International from some European cities, or both Belfast City and International airports from London and other UK cities in around one hour.

7. Loch Fyne, Scotland

For lovers of seafood, there is no better place to head for than Loch Fyne, a sea loch that extends 45 miles inland on Scotland's west coast. Renowned for its oysters, the villages that dot the shoreline are home to some great pubs and seafood restaurants. The Fyne is part of the Seafood Trail, a driving route that links 11 different establishments offering the best local seafood and oysters. But it's just not shellfish that call the loch waters home; there are also great wildlife-spotting opportunities, with dolphins, seals and otters all inhabiting Loch Fyne. www.theseafoodtrail.com



Fresh Scottish shellfish.

Getting there: *Loch Fyne is around one hour's drive from Glasgow, the train to Arrochar and Tarbet, on the shores of the loch, take just over an hour.*

8. New Forest, Hampshire, south England

One of the most beautiful and historic areas in the south of England, the New Forest dates back 1,000 years. In recent years, it has also become something of a foodie destination, with many village inns reinventing themselves as 'gastropubs', such as The Pig, the East End Arms and the Oak in Lyndhurst. The introduction of the New Forest Marque, which signifies local produce is a great way to identify meats, fruit and vegetables that have been grown in the area. Many hotels and bed and breakfasts in the area have also signed up the 'New Forest Breakfast' scheme, which ensures that at least three main ingredients of the breakfast must come from the New Forest area. www.thepighotel.com, www.eastendarms.co.uk, <http://oakinnlyndhurst.co.uk>, www.newforestproduce.co.uk

Getting there: *The New Forest is around 90 mins drive south-west of London. Trains to Lyndhurst, in the heart of the Forest, take 90 minutes from London Waterloo.*

9. Canterbury, Kent, south-east England

The orchards and farmland that characterise the Kent countryside, in the south-east corner of England, has led to the country being known as the 'Garden of England.' It's fitting, then, that the first daily farmers market in the country is in Canterbury, where local farmers, speciality producers and artisan bakers all come to sell their produce. The Goods Shed is a converted warehouse next to Canterbury West station, which now houses a number of food stalls, a deli, and a renowned restaurant that takes the best produce from the market to make hearty, modern British dishes. www.thegoodsshed.co.uk

Getting there: *Canterbury is around 90 minutes' drive south-east of London, or one hour by train from St Pancras.*

10. Padstow, Cornwall, south-west England

The Cornish fishing village of Padstow, on the north coast of Cornwall in the south-west England, has become synonymous with one man, chef Rick Stein, who first opened a restaurant in the village in 1974. He now owns four restaurants, a seafood cookery school and several places to stay, and is so associated with the



Padstow, Cornwall, boasts four restaurants by top chef Rick Stein

village that it is often referred to as Padstein. It's a charming place to visit, with shops, pubs and eateries lining the harbour, from which a small fishing fleet still heads out each morning. The village sits on the shore of the river Camel, and there are regular taxi boats across the river to the opposite village of Rock. At low tide there are some lovely beach walks, perfect to work up an appetite for a seafood supper.

Getting there: Padstow is around five hours' drive from London. The nearest station is Bodmin Parkway, four hours from London Paddington, which is a 40-minute drive from Padstow by bus or taxi.

Food with a view - beauty spot restaurants

When it comes to truly memorable meals, location is always a key factor: far better a panoramic vista of perfect countryside than the bland basement room in a fast-food outlet. Happily, Great Britain has an abundance of top-notch restaurants and cafes, both urban

and rural, which also boast perches to take a diner's breath away. Your Instagram account will never look back...



Gaze out over Edinburgh from Chaophraya and sample Scottish-Thai cuisine from on high

Chaophraya, Edinburgh, Scotland

All of Chaophraya's high-quality Thai restaurants boast lavish locations, but its recent Edinburgh opening, located plum in the middle of Scotland's capital city, quite literally sets a new high. 33 Castle Street is a rooftop establishment with spellbinding views - from the Glass Box, a transparent cube - of Edinburgh Castle, one of Britain's most iconic landmarks. The playful menu,

meanwhile, includes Scottish-Thai offerings such as seared scallops and black pudding with mango, chilli and palm sugar. Retire to the cocktail bar afterwards - the gorgeous skyline remains just as visible. chaophraya.co.uk/venues/chaophraya-edinburgh

The Pipe & Glass Inn, Yorkshire, England

In the best tradition of English country pubs, the Pipe & Glass can be a bit hard to find. It's only an hour's drive from York, in north-eastern England, but situated along narrow, little-signposted lanes that twist and turn like telephone cables. But once you do locate this quaint, cosy gem - awarded a Michelin star in 2010 for its inventive take on local dishes - ask for a room in the glass annexe. Because, from there, miles of vintage farmland extend all the way to the undulating Yorkshire Wolds. www.pipeandglass.co.uk



Michelin-starred dining in a tranquil country setting - the Pipe and Glass Inn

Cloud 23, Manchester, England

Sitting atop a Hilton hotel, Cloud 23 affords panoramas of one of Britain's most energised cities. Set on England's west coast, Manchester's skyline has lately seen pioneering additions in the form of MediaCityUK, One Angel Square and urban regeneration project NOMA. Check how all are taking shape from this 23rd-floor bar while you eat afternoon tea (12-5pm), or

sip a cocktail inspired by the Stone Roses, a legendary local band. The luxury bar's zones are named after Greek gods, deities who knew a thing or two about sitting in the sky.

www.cloud23bar.com

Fifteen Cornwall, England

Fifteen is restaurant brand run by British celebrity chef Jamie Oliver and staffed with apprentice chefs. This Cornish outpost is arguably its most famous, thanks to a stunning position above Newquay's romantic Watergate Bay. England's far south-westerly county, Cornwall is renowned for its picturesque seascapes like this. Reserve a window table for a summer evening, and watch surfers catch sunset waves as you devour Italian-inspired dishes made from local ingredients - including pastas using Cornish durum wheat. www.fifteencornwall.co.uk



Celebrity chef Jamie Oliver's restaurant brand Fifteen's Cornish outpost offers a side of sea-view with delicious Italian-inspired cuisine

The Grill Restaurant, Conwy, North Wales

UNESCO ranks Conwy Castle among Europe's 'finest examples of late 13th & early 14th century military architecture' - making it not a bad building at which to stare during dinner! That's one boon for eaters at The Grill, part of the Quay Hotel in Deganwy, an estuary village close to Llandudno on the North Wales coast. The other is award-winning meals based on fine, locally-sourced ingredients, from Menai mussels to the finest Welsh beef and lamb. Equally regional are the bar's Great Orme Brewery ales.

www.quayhotel.co.uk/restaurant-and-bar



Sip wine and eat seafood from your table at The Airds in western Scotland as the sun sets before you

The Airds, Argyll and Bute, West coast of Scotland

Set on the craggy, dramatic west coast of Scotland near Oban, The Airds Hotel overlooks Loch Linnhe. Its acclaimed restaurant gazes across this seaside lake towards the Morvern Hills, and a west-facing position means the additional bonus of fantastic sunsets. Better still, this side of Scotland is known for offering some of the world's finest seafood, and the consistent award of three AA rosettes proves that head chef Jordan Annabi certainly knows what to do with it.

www.prideofbritainhotels.com/airds_hotel_and_restaurant

The Quays, County Down, Northern Ireland

The combination of sensational seafood and sea views is also promised in Northern Ireland's easternmost settlement. Located on the pretty harbourside of Portavogie in County Down, about 25 miles south of Belfast, The Quays Restaurant cooks fish fresh off the local boats, with the seasonal specialities including crab claws, lobster, Dover sole and turbot. Watch the last fishermen return to shore while you feast; the family-friendly establishment faces across the Irish Sea towards the Isle of Man, which can easily be seen on a clear day. www.quaysrestaurant.co.uk



Dizzying heights plus dining - Snowdonia's Hafod Eryri serves food with a view

Hafod Eryri, Snowdonia, Wales

What with it being Wales' highest peak, one would hope Mount Snowdon's summit offered a decent view. And indeed it does: the Isle of Anglesey and vast swathes of rugged Snowdonia are gloriously on show. Less predictable is the fact that they're also visible from a cafe. Opened on the 3,560-foot summit in 2009, Hafod Eryri serves sandwiches and soft drinks inside a £8M glass-walled building which

doubles as a visitor centre. Its customers aren't confined to triumphant mountaineers, either - the Snowdon Railway terminates here. www.eryri-npa.gov.uk/visiting/hafod-eryri

The Old Forge, West coast of Scotland

Officially Britain's remotest pub - even the Guinness Book of Records says so - The Old Forge is only reachable via a 18-mile hike across uncompromising hills, or a choppy 20-minute ferry around the Knoydart Peninsula. And all that solely from the port of Mallaig, five hours north of Glasgow by train. It's well worth it, though: partly for the bygone village feel, partly for the hand-dived scallops and venison, and partly for the window-watching, with Loch Nevis on the doorstep. If you fancy putting off the return journey, cosy cottages are at hand nearby. www.theoldforge.co.uk

Gliffaes, Brecon Beacons, South Wales

Found in the middle of South Wales, the Brecon Beacons is a beautiful range of hills boasting moorland, Norman castles, market towns and the odd neolithic stone circle. The wisest visitors hole up at Gliffaes, a cosy country-house hotel whose conservatory restaurant (also open to non-guests) overlooks a particularly scenic Beacons stretch, and which serves high-quality Welsh meat at affordable prices. Go in autumn or winter for seasonal game dishes; go anytime for the extensive wine cellar.

www.gliffaeshotel.com/food-drink/dinner

Dine in a treehouse or a prison - ten unusually located eateries

Looking for a restaurant where the site is as memorable as the food? Britain serves up the quirkiest side of restaurant locations.

Treetop treats

Treehouse Restaurant, Alnwick Gardens, Northumberland, north-east England



Fairytale charm is all around at Alnwick Gardens' Treehouse Restaurant

Feasting on Northumbrian rib eye steak or haunch of venison while perched high in the treetops of mature lime trees may feel like something straight out of a scene from a gastronomic fairytale but it's reality at Alnwick Gardens' intriguing Treehouse Restaurant. This enormous treehouse is crafted from sustainably sourced Canadian cedar, Scandinavian redwood and English and Scots pine and certainly evokes fairytale charm. Decorated with tiny lights, a roaring log fire and trees growing through the floor, diners reach the restaurant via sky high walkways and wobbly rope bridges. Open the menu and find dishes

created from local produce, ranging from local fish and seafood to meat from Northumberland's farmlands and regional specialities. The enchanting setting is just two minutes' drive from Alnwick Castle - itself an inspiration for Harry Potter's Hogwarts, and where many of the film franchise's scenes were filmed - magical!

www.alnwickgarden.com/explore/whats-here/the-treehouse/restaurant

How to get there: The Gardens are around a 40-minute drive north of Newcastle, north-east England, or less than two hour's drive south of Edinburgh, Scotland.

Fine fare on the London Underground

Underground Supper Club, London

No, not just grabbing a quick sandwich while taking a tube journey across London...this is actual silver service dining on a tube train! Okay, so you won't be travelling at speed during rush hour - but that makes for a much more relaxing experience. Guests eat on a decommissioned Victoria Line Underground railway carriage stationed at the Walthamstow Pumphouse Transport Museum, but once you're on board, everything looks the same as the London Underground. Hosted by Basement Galley, who introduced the culinary concept of the Underground Supper Club, an 'off-peak single from starter to dessert' costs £39 and takes diners through the delights of a five-course taster menu. And it's certainly far removed from your everyday tube passenger experience.

www.basementgalley.com www.walthamstowpumphousemuseum.org.uk

How to get there: The nearest Underground station to the venue is Walthamstow Tube on the Victoria Line.

Gourmet and a good cause

Clink Restaurant - HMP Cardiff, Wales

A simple aim - to reduce reoffending rates - has led to the opening of restaurants in several British prisons. The Clink Charity, in conjunction with Her Majesty's Prison Service (HMP), opened the first venue, Clink Cymru, at HMP Cardiff where around 30 prisoners from there, and nearby HMP Prescoed, work within the 96-cover restaurant and kitchen. Diners will discover how the restaurant promotes the rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners, who cook and serve both organic produce from Wales as well as including fruit, meat, vegetables, poultry and herbs supplied by the farms and gardens at Prescoed. The restaurant has been described as "an intimate dining room, with high-beamed ceilings and neat colour-block décor...the style is elaborate but not overblown and much of the food, while fancy-sounding, is contemporary cuisine served with a slight twist." There are also Clink Restaurants at HMP High Down (Surrey, south-east England) and the most recent restaurant has opened at HMP Brixton in south London. The Clink Charity aims to open ten more restaurants by 2017. <http://theclinkrestaurant.com/restaurants>

How to get there: Cardiff is a two-hour train journey from London Paddington.

Far-flung food

Gallan Head Hotel, Isle of Lewis, Scotland

Want to dine away from the crowds? Well, you couldn't get much further than the cliff-top restaurant and the Gallan Head Hotel, the most north-westerly restaurant in the British Isles! The restaurant, on the Isle of Lewis in Scotland's Outer Hebrides, is housed in a converted military prefab (the hotel occupies what was the administration building of the former RAF base at Gallan Head, which was built in 1954 to monitor the North Atlantic Gap during the Cold War years), with spectacular views looking out onto the wild Atlantic Ocean. The menu naturally focuses on local produce - featuring gems such as Atlantic cod and coriander spring rolls, South Harris langoustines and braised Lewis lamb shank with Orkney Cheddar mash. *Lonely Planet* says: "The food is superb - local seafood, lamb and venison expertly prepared - and the setting unique." And, if you want to stay the night to make the most of the location, there are five double rooms available.

www.gallanheadhotel.co.uk

How to get there: Fly to Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis from either Edinburgh, Glasgow or Inverness.

Munch a meal among magnificent plants

Petersham Nurseries Café, Surrey, south-east England

Purchase plants, antiques and garden ornaments from this celebrated garden centre at Petersham Nurseries in Richmond, then dine on Michelin-star, seasonally inspired food - created with naturally sourced ingredients supplemented with edible flowers, herbs and heritage vegetable varieties from the nurseries' walled kitchen garden - six days a week. The Petersham Nurseries Café won its first Michelin star in 2011, when the kitchen was under the direction of Skye Gyngell, and



Shop for plants then dine on meals in the Café created with the ingredients growing at Petersham Nurseries. Credit David Lotus

retained the star in 2012 with the help of Australian chef Greg Malouf. Last year the owners of the Nurseries brought in a new culinary team who are leading on the Italian-inspired menu offering meals such as chargrilled cannon of lamb, artichokes, new season peas, broad beans and mint, and baked monkfish with marjoram, capers and lentils. <http://petershamnurseries.com>

How to get there: A fast train from London Waterloo takes just 15 minutes to reach Richmond.

Bistro in a barnyard

The Barn Bistro, Burniston (near Scarborough), Yorkshire, north England

Thankfully the animals have all moved out, and this converted traditional farm building - still retaining a rustic charm - is home to The Barn Bistro. Diners are served up a Yorkshire-inspired menu for breakfasts and lunches and there are traditional Sunday lunches and afternoon teas on offer, plus a monthly evening dining special menu event. Diners will certainly experience the venue's farmyard roots - children are invited to feed the onsite chickens, and work begins in late spring, on the land rotivated by the restaurant's pigs the previous summer, to become a Potager-style kitchen garden, with home-grown vegetables, such as squashes, cabbages, Swiss chard, French beans and fennel, being planted. <http://thebarnbistro.com>

How to get there: Scarborough is around an hour's drive from York.

Vintage elegance, contemporary dining

British Pullman/Northern Bell trains, England



Change of courses, changing views; lunch on the British Pullman or Northern Bell trains

Marry the elegance of a 1920s train with champagne, fine wines and seasonal dishes on board the Belmond British Pullman. The sister train to the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express, the Pullman departs from London Victoria to travel through the British countryside while guests feast on meals where each course is inspired by the views from the window; the chefs create menus using the local produce of the regions the train travels through. You'll be equally inspired by the train's heritage; the luxury carriages have carried royalty and dignitaries, the oldest carriage dates back to 1925 while others survived bomb damage during air-raids over Victoria Station in 1940.

Sister train the Belmond Northern Belle offers a similarly creative five-course lunch, while racing through the stunning countryside of northern England, with departures from Leeds, York and Manchester. www.belmond.com/web/luxury/home.jsp

Float while you feast

On board a canal boat, Birmingham, central England

If you like your views to change as you change courses, Away2Dine operates a cruising restaurant travelling along the canals of Birmingham. The three-hour cruise means dinner is at a leisurely pace and it takes you through the city's original canal from 1769, as well as

travelling out to a rural setting as well past the city centre. The evening dinners or Sunday lunch cruisers sail through these historic canals in England's second largest city, such as the Birmingham Old Main Line and the Worcester & Birmingham Canal.

www.away2dine.co.uk/index.html

How to get there: Birmingham is around 90 minutes by train from London Euston.

Eat in a church

Cottiers, Glasgow, Scotland

Sit on salvaged church chairs, and marvel at the gold ceilings and handcrafted gilt mirrors that pepper the décor at Cottiers restaurant, situated in a church conversion in Glasgow, which is also home to a theatre and bar. Named after Daniel Cottier, a revolutionary artist-designer who decorated the building when it was built in 1865, the restaurant's menu is fully focused on using fresh Scottish ingredients, with produce such as West Coast mussels, Stornoway black pudding fritters and burgers served with Isle of Mull Cheddar and smoked Ayrshire bacon are just an example of what's found on the menu. Tie a meal in with hand-crafted Scottish ales matchings. Divine. www.cottiers.com

How to get there: The restaurant is located in the West End of Glasgow, a ten-minute taxi ride from Glasgow Central station.

Red-hot former fire station

Chiltern Firehouse, London

While this Marylebone-based restaurant only opened in March 2014, the buzz about the venue - owned by famed hotelier André Balazs with Nuno Mendes heading up the kitchen - has been generated by word of mouth and the sheer number of A-list celebrities that have been spotted dining here (think Kate Moss, Harry Styles, Stella McCartney). Situated in a Grade II-listed Victorian fire station it now houses a restaurant and bar (with a hotel earmarked to open) with a décor featuring a tiled ceiling, low-hanging light fittings...and a fireman's pole! Plus the huge firehouse doors have been retained. Featuring delicacies such as crab doughnuts, steak tartare spiced with chipotle and Monkfish cooked over pine with puff barley and fennel, it's rapidly become one of the hottest places in town.

www.chilternfirehouse.com

Restaurants with rooms

There's nothing nicer than eating a sumptuous banquet in delightful surroundings, then knowing those surroundings are yours - and all you need to do is head out of the dining room, straight into your bedroom. Britain is home to classic and contemporary restaurants with rooms - note the emphasis on 'restaurants' first, meaning these are food-lovers' havens. The following ten also boast the utmost in comfort in their lodgings to boot.

1. Mr Underhills, Ludlow, Shropshire, west England

A Ludlow institution, Mr Underhills offers a unique dining experience with a different nine-course menu every day. Self-taught chef Chris creates dishes from whatever their local suppliers deliver, along with fresh herbs and vegetables from local gardeners and foraging trips. Everything - from breakfast brioche to hand-made petit fours - is made in-house, and the restaurant manages to combine faultless cuisine with a style of service that is formal without being stuffy. To make a night of it, there are three plush suites, or stay in the 'shed', a spacious separate double room with wonderful river views.

www.mr-underhills.co.uk

Getting there: Ludlow is approximately three hours' drive west of London; three-and-a-half hours by train from London Paddington, changing at Newport or Hereford.

2. Russells of Broadway, Worcestershire, west England

Broadway is one of the most picturesque of all the Cotswolds villages and Russells sits at its very heart, a beautiful house built of traditional honey-coloured stone. The restaurant serves modern British cuisine such as Cornish monkfish with smoked aubergine purée, while the indulgent puddings have to vie for attention with an excellent range of local cheeses. The Cotswolds is one of Britain's most beautiful areas, with rolling hills and idyllic villages, and the town of Stratford upon Avon, famous as the birthplace of William Shakespeare, is under an hour's drive away. www.russellofbroadway.co.uk

Getting there: Broadway is around two hours' drive west of London; nearest train station is a 20-minute taxi ride away at Moreton-in-Marsh (90 minutes from London Paddington).

3. Rayanne House, Belfast, Northern Ireland

Rayanne's is actually a guesthouse, with the only exclusively private dining restaurant in Belfast. Nevertheless, it is possible for couples to book in for the Titanic Menu on certain dates, and if you can it's well worth doing. Chef Conor has recreated the last menu served on the ill-fated ship, and it's nine lavish courses, each more delicious than the last, including a delicate rose water and mint sorbet and pan-fried filet mignon topped with foie gras. The rooms are comfortable and cosy, with soft and snuggly dressing gowns, a carafe of port and two crystal glasses, and views over the Irish Sea. The gourmet breakfast is worth having even if you're not a guest - chilled creamed porridge sounds bizarre but tastes delicious, peanut butter and banana French toast is heavenly and if you don't want a full Irish (though it's highly recommended) you can have scrambled eggs with crabmeat or potato bread smothered with melted Irish cheddar. www.rayannehouse.com

Getting there: Rayanne's is in the upmarket Holywood area of Belfast, just over ten minutes from the city centre by taxi.

4. Barley Bree, Perthshire, central Scotland

Roaring fires, gleaming wooden floors and exposed brickwork give the Barley Bree a wonderfully cosy feel in the winter months, while in summer the pretty garden is the perfect spot for an aperitif. Fabrice (in the kitchen) and Alison (pouring the wine) create a lovely relaxed feel, serving up hearty dishes such as wild sea bass fillet, swede & saffron purée and curried roast cauliflower. The six rooms have a cool, coffee-and-cream style of decor and the pub makes a great base for exploring the surrounding area, including the magnificent Stirling Castle (around half an hour's drive) and the rugged Loch Lomond National park. www.barleybree.com

***Getting there:** Muthill is around one hour's drive north of Edinburgh and Glasgow; the nearest train station is a 20-minute taxi ride away at Gleneagles (which is one hour from Edinburgh).*

5. The Marquis at Alkham, Dover, Kent, south-east England

The Kent countryside has long been known as the Garden of England, and the Marquis makes the most of local produce, with inventive dishes such as loin of Whitfield lamb, and lip-smacking desserts using local Kentish fruit. Wines and beers from local producers are well-represented, and the Marquis also does a spectacular afternoon tea with hand-made pastries and delicate sandwiches. The ten bedrooms have a sleek, unfussy style, all with gorgeous views across the surrounding hills. www.themarquisatalkham.co.uk

***Getting there:** Alkham is 90 minutes south-east of London, and just ten minutes from the Eurotunnel and Dover's port and cruise terminal. Dover Priory station is less than four miles away (less than two hours from London Charing Cross).*

6. Kilberry Inn, Tarbet, Argyll, Scotland

From the outside the Kilberry looks an unassuming kind of place; the low, white-washed walls and red tin roof give little sign of the culinary treats on offer once inside. The menu makes the most of the fantastic seafood from the west coast, with recipes kept simple to make the most of ingredients such as hand-dived scallops, local crab and fresh surf clams. There are five comfortable rooms to stay in, and the surrounding countryside offers great walks, deserted beaches and excellent wildlife-spotting, including otters and rare birds. www.kilberryinn.com

***Getting there:** The Kilberry Inn is less than three hours' drive from Glasgow; Arrochar and Tarbet station is around 90 minutes from Glasgow Queen Street station.*

7. Llys Meddyg, Newport, Pembrokeshire, west Wales

Luxury with a light hand is the order of the day at Llys Meddyg located on the coast of north Wales, from the Aromatherapy Associates bathroom goodies to the original artwork on the walls. The lovely Georgian townhouse also houses one of Wales' best restaurants, where the accent is on the best local ingredients; confit leg of pheasant and supreme, butter bean and celeriac. There are three dining rooms to choose from; romantics should opt for the lovely Kitchen Garden, which opens out onto the pretty secret garden. www.llysmeddyg.com

***Getting there:** Newport is less than three hours' drive from Cardiff; the nearest train station is a half-hour taxi ride away at Fishguard (which is 90 minutes by train from Cardiff).*

8. The York Arms, Nidderdale, Yorkshire, north England

Surrounded by the tranquil rolling countryside of the Yorkshire Dales, the Yorke Arms is a former 18th-century coaching inn that has been carefully converted into a Michelin-starred restaurant, with a clutch of sumptuously comfortable bedrooms. Co-owned and run by Frances Atkins, one of only six female Michelin-starred chefs in Britain, the restaurant serves up the best Yorkshire produce, from Whitby crab to Wensleydale soufflé and local beef. www.yorke-arms.co.uk

***Getting there:** Nidderdale village is around one hour east of York. The nearest train station is a 45-minute taxi drive to Harrogate (around three hours from London Kings Cross).*

9. The Checkers, Montgomery, west Wales

Awarded a Michelin star, this restaurant in west Wales, run by chef proprietor Stéphane Borie, offers classic French cooking married with a comprehensive wine list and local real ales. Housed in a former coaching inn, there are also three en-suite rooms available. www.thecheckersmontgomery.co.uk

***Getting there:** Montgomery is around a two-hour drive north of Cardiff. The nearest train station is Newtown (seven miles from Montgomery), which can be reached from Cardiff in under three hours, with one change at Shrewsbury.*

10. Bushmills Inn, Bushmills, Co. Antrim, N Ireland

The Bushmills Inn is the perfect base for exploring some of Northern Ireland's most impressive sites, including the Giant's Causeway, Bushmills distillery and Dunluce Castle, and after a day's sightseeing it offers wonderful local food and a comfortable room for the night. Traditional Irish dishes are on offer, alongside spectacular seafood platters and hearty steaks, but you need to make sure there's room for the sumptuous sticky toffee pudding. The firelit Gas bar is a great place for a pre-dinner Guinness or nip of whisky - it's the only place, except the distillery itself, where you can sample a 12-year-old Bushmills whisky - soft, smooth and warming. www.bushmills.com

***Getting there:** Bushmills is just over an hour's drive north of Belfast. There is no train service to Bushmills, but a daily bus leaves Belfast at 09.00.*

Regional specialities - tempting treats from around Britain

Bakewell pudding/tart

What is it?: Have your sweet tooth at the ready - this is a pastry tart packed with almond flavouring topped with raspberry or cherry jam. The tart is distinct from the Bakewell pudding, which is a dessert made with flaky pastry, a layer of jam and an almond filling.

What's the story?: Said to have originated in the attractive market town of Bakewell in Derbyshire, central England, it's thought that the pudding was the original version and can be traced back to the 16th century. There is some debate on how the pudding became a tart, but the general accepted view is a cook made a mistake with the recipe.

Where can I eat it?: Bakewell of course! If you want to find out more about the product while you're eating one, the Old Original Bakewell Pudding Shop is a good place to start - it's said to be here that the first was served in 1860. Hand-made to a secret recipe, you can enjoy the puddings in the restaurant above the shop and during an afternoon tea. Elsewhere, you can purchase the sweet treat from the Bakewell Pudding Parlour café and restaurant and then head upstairs for a glass of wine at its wine bar.



The famous Old Original Bakewell Pudding Shop - worth a visit!

Bakewell is a bus ride from Matlock, which is 2.5 hours from London's St Pancras by train.

www.bakewellpuddingshop.co.uk, www.postapudding.com

Cornish pasty

What is it?: Succulent meat and vegetables encased in warm, golden pastry and, if it's a genuine Cornish pasty - that is, made in Cornwall, south-west England - it has to have a distinctive 'D' shape and be crimped on one side.

What's the story?: A long one; the Oxford English Dictionary suggests that the pasty was identified in around 1300. By the 18th century it was well established as a Cornish food staple, eaten by poorer working families who could afford the cheaper ingredients of potatoes, onion and swede, plus its size and shape meant it was easy for miners and farm workers to transport. The pasty was one of the first fast foods!

Where can I eat it? Pretty much the moment you cross the county border into Cornwall, you can pick up a pasty in a butchers or bakers. Malcolm Barnecutt has seven bakeries around Cornwall selling hand-made goods made fresh overnight, plus two restaurants where you can linger over a pasty, one in St Austell and one in Bodmin. Rowe's Bakeries, also dotted throughout the county, make award-winning pasties, with four bakeries in the coastal town of Falmouth alone.

Trains from London go to various places in Cornwall, and taken between 4 and 5 hours depending on where you are going. www.barnecutt.co.uk, www.rowesbakers.co.uk

Haggis

What is it?: One of Scotland's most famous dishes, haggis is a savoury pudding containing sheep offal mince mixed with oatmeal, suet and spices. Traditionally encased in a sheep's stomach nowadays it's mostly prepared in a sausage casing, and served with 'neeps and tatties' (turnip and potato) and, of course, a wee dram of whisky.



A fine Scottish tradition; haggis and whisky

What's the story?: The exact origins of the haggis aren't known - there is some research to suggest it originates from the days of Scottish cattle drovers, where they took haggis to eat on their long journey through the Highlands, yet there are other stories saying it was carried to Scotland aboard a Viking ship. However, it's been considered a Scottish national dish since Robert Burns penned *Address to a Haggis* in 1787 and which is traditionally recited on Burns' Night as the haggis is brought in. But one thing it definitely *isn't* is a 'wild furry

three-legged beast of the Highlands that lurks into the cities at night, like a fox', however tempting that story may be to tell visitors! (Some 'inventive' Scottish tour guides like to tell tourists this version of the story!)

Where can I eat it?: You'll find it on many a menu in Scotland; for fine dining options in Edinburgh, the Wedgwood Restaurant serves a choice of haggis with its Scottish fillet of beef or you can eat it at the city's only haggis and whisky pub, aptly named the Arcade Haggis & Whisky Pub. At Babbity Bowsters in Glasgow you'll find chicken stuffed with haggis on the menu and it's also interestingly served with neeps and tatties in one of the city's top seafood restaurants, the City Merchant.

www.wedgwoodtherestaurant.co.uk, www.arcadepub.co.uk, www.babbitybowster.com, www.citymerchant.co.uk

Kendal Mint Cake

What is it?: A peppermint-flavoured confectionery - not a cake as the name suggests - handmade in traditional open-topped copper pans, originating from Kendal in Cumbria, north England, home of the Lake District. It's popular among climbers and mountaineers as a good source of energy.

What's the story?: The tale has it that the cake happened when a batch of peppermint creams' mixture was left overnight by mistake with the solidified mint cake found in the morning. There are currently three companies producing mint cake in Kendal; Romney's, whose mint cake was the first to be carried to the summit of Mount Everest in 1953; Quiggins, the oldest surviving mint cake company that has operated in Kendal since 1880; and Wilson's, founded in 1913 and which also sells a Beatrix Potter range of sweets.

Where can I eat it?: You'll find all these companies mint cakes at the Mintcake Mine Shop in Bowness on Windermere, a 20-minute drive from Kendal, but it's easy to find Kendal mint cake in sweet shops, supermarkets or village stores across the Lake District.

www.mintcakemine.co.uk

Melton Mowbray pork pie

What is it?: Fresh, chopped pork encased in jelly and a crunchy pastry; the Melton Mowbray pork pie has a distinctive bow shape, distinguishing it from other pork pies *plus* it is a European Union-protected food name.

What's the story?: In the 18th century the pie was baked in a clay pot with a rough 'parcel' of pastry around a pork filling, allowing the pie to be carried at work - it was often taken by servants and grooms accompanying their masters on hunts in the Melton area (in Leicestershire, central England). As the huntsmen started to take them on hunts the pie developed to feature an edible crust pastry and bonestock jelly, which would fill the air spaces to preserve the meat for longer and make sure the pie didn't crumble when jumping over ditches on horseback. The Melton Mowbray pie is distinctive in that it is baked free standing and the meat used is fresh pork so cooks to a naturally grey colour rather than the pink colour of cured pork found in other pork pies.



Melton Mowbray pork pies - so distinguished they are a European Union-protected food name

Where can I eat it?: Find authentic Melton Mowbray pork pies in Melton Mowbray itself with a visit to Ye Olde Pork Pie Shoppe; Dickinson & Morris has been baking pork pies here since 1851, making it the oldest pork pie bakery in town. You can also find the original pork pie recipe baked at Mrs King's Pork Pies, 20 minutes from Melton Mowbray in Cotgrave, Nottinghamshire, which has been a small family bakery since 1853 and sells pies that earned the accolade 'Winner of the Best Hand Raised Melton Mowbray Pork Pie - 2013-2014'.

www.porkpie.co.uk, www.mrskingsporkpies.co.uk

Pie, mash and liquor

What is it?: Quite simply, minced beef pie, mashed potato and the special liquor, which is a rich parsley sauce. The pies began life as eel pies, when there was an abundance of eels in the River Thames, but over time the pies began to be made with minced beef and onion. You can still find eels (of the jellied variety) served in many pie and mash shops.

What's the story?: Eel, pie and mash houses have their roots firmly in east London; they're a true Cockney food story. Although the houses were a Victorian creation, the food had been sold on stalls since the 18th century.

Where can I eat it?: Pie shops are found all over London, particularly in the East End. Try London's oldest pie and mash shop, M. Manzes in south-east London, where they still use the same recipes today for the pies and liquor as they did in 1902 when it first opened (try the jellied or stewed eels on sale there too). Or, if you head to Tony's Pie and Mash Shop in Waltham Abbey, Essex (half an hour by train from London), you might get more than the food - it's reportedly one of David Beckham's favourite places to eat!

www.manze.co.uk, www.facebook.com/pages/Tonys-Pie-And-Mash-Shop/143210232408225

Soda bread

What is it?: A quick-baked bread using sodium bicarbonate (baking soda) instead of yeast, which is a firm part of Ireland's food history - in Northern Ireland it's known as soda farls.

What's the story?: Farls comes from the Ulster Scot word fardel, which means 'a fourth'. The dough is flattened and then divided into four. The breads are hearty fare and are served with both butter and jam or with savoury foods such as smoked salmon or bacon.

Where can I eat it?: Soda bread is served in a traditional Northern Irish fry up alongside sausages, bacon, eggs, potato bread and black pudding at That Wee Café in Belfast or in elegant surroundings at the Great Room restaurant at the city's Merchant Hotel - enjoy its eggs benedict served on soda bread.

www.thatweecafe.com, www.themerchanthotel.com/index.php/dining-at-the-great-room.html

Welsh laverbread

What is it?: Not bread of any sort, as the name suggests, laverbread is a traditional Welsh delicacy made of nutritious seaweed harvested from rocks off the Welsh coast, which is washed, cooked, then minced into a thick black/green paste. You'll hear it referred to as 'bara lawr' in Welsh.

What's the story?: In the early 19th century, laverbread formed part of the traditional breakfast (with bacon, sausages and mushrooms) that Welsh miners would eat to prepare for the long working day ahead. Yet there is evidence that the first written description of it appeared in a 1607 copy of *Britannia*, describing the springtime gathering of 'lhawvan' from the beaches of Pembrokeshire, west Wales.

Where can I eat it?: Why not try bara lawr with another Welsh delicacy harvested from the country's coastlines - cockles (chocos)? You'll find them on the menu at country pub The Smith Arms Restaurant in Foelgastell, near Llanelli in south-west Wales, with the laverbread baked with bacon and leeks. Discover it on the seasonal menus at foodie heaven, the Bodnant Welsh Food Centre in north Wales; you'll find it matched with plenty of other treats from Wales' natural larder and locally sourced produce.

www.thesmithsarms.co.uk, www.bodnant-welshfood.co.uk

Yorkshire pudding

What is it?: A traditional British Sunday roast dinner would not be the same without Yorkshire pudding - a pudding made of eggs, flour and milk and usually served with roast meat and gravy, although it can also be served with jam, syrup, custard as a dessert.

What's the story?: It's not really know when the Yorkshire pudding first made an appearance on British plates, but the first-ever recorded recipe features in the early 18th century book *The Whole Duty of a Woman*. It was called a Dripping pudding in here - the dripping (the fat and juices) coming from spit-roast meat.



Yorkshire pudding - a must with a Sunday roast

Where should I eat it?: Wherever you see signs in restaurants or pubs serving a Sunday roast, you can pretty much guarantee it will come with Yorkshire pudding. But why not head to Yorkshire in north England to enjoy the region as well as its pudding! The award-winning traditional village inn, The Carpenters Arms, in the village of Felixkirk, near Thirsk in north Yorkshire, serves a Sunday lunch menu where Yorkshire pudding is the accompaniment to its mains. And the Fat Badger pub in Harrogate, north Yorkshire, serves giant Yorkshire puddings with either roast beef or sausages in the centre.

www.thecarpentersarmsfelixkirk.com/carpenters-arms-home, www.thefatbadger.co.uk

Food with funny names! A brief guide

Eton Mess - a gooey delicious dessert of meringue, cream and strawberries, the myth is that the dessert got its name when an elegant meringue dessert was accidentally dropped on the way to an Eton school picnic. It may not be true but it certainly would explain the dish's appearance.

Bubble & Squeak - a classic leftovers dish, this was originally a mix of fried meat and cabbage but now tends to be potato and cabbage. The name refers to the bubbling of the meat in the pot and the squeaks of steam.

Kedgeree - a breakfast favourite of the British upper classes, this mix of basmati rice, smoked haddock, eggs and curry powder is thought to have originated in India, as a rice and bean dish known as Khichri. Brought back to the UK by British colonials, it's another dish which makes excellent use of leftovers.

Cullen Skink - it may sound unappealing, but this is a delicious soup of smoked haddock, potatoes and cream, whose name translates as 'essence of Cullen' - the town from which the soup originated.

Toad in the Hole - another less-than-delicious sounding dish, this is a hearty meal of sausages, surrounded by a thick Yorkshire batter pudding. The name supposedly refers to the sausages poking up out of the batter, looking like toads.

Champ - a classic Irish dish, made of mashed potatoes, spring onions and cream, similar to another Irish dish, colcannon, made with kale. Depending on the region of Northern Ireland, champ may also be referred to as 'poundies' or 'howd' with the origins of these names rooted in Ulster-Scots and Gaelic culture.

Potato Bread - Particular to Northern Ireland, this is traditionally a breakfast time staple originally invented to make mashed potatoes last longer by combining them with flour. The dense satisfying texture of potato bread made it a firm favourite, which now makes appearances on menus as an element of starters and main courses.

Fish and Chips - where to have it

The humble fish and chip supper has long been a favourite meal everywhere in Britain, and began life as a treat for the working classes in the mid-19th century. The fishing industry boomed during the period, with rapid development of trawler fishing in the North Sea, combined with the creation of railways linking the ports to urban centres. Fried fish became increasingly popular in London and the south east of the country (Charles Dickens mentions a 'fried fish warehouse' in *Oliver Twist*, published in 1838), while chips were more of a northern invention. It remains unclear how the two became combined, but the first fish and chip shop is commemorated with a blue plaque in Oldham's Tommyfield Market (half an hour outside Manchester), which claims the first chips were fried on the site in 1860.

Originally, the fish and chips would have been fried in beef fat or 'lard' (pig fat) but today, vegetable oil is more usual. Best of all, traditional 'chip shop chips' are much thicker than American or French fries - meaning they have a lower fat content.

Here are ten great fish and chippies in Britain.

Stein's Fish and Chips, Padstow, Cornwall, south-west England



*Stein's takeaway fish and chips.
Credit VisitBritain/Martin Brent*

TV chef Rick Stein is Britain's best known authority on fish, and foodies travel across the country to visit his seafood restaurant in the Cornish coastal town of Padstow. He also offers excellent fish and chips, either eat-in or takeaway, from premises on South Quay. In 2009 he opened a second Cornwall-based branch in Falmouth. While Padstow is around 200 miles from London, a four-hour scenic train journey will get you to the nearest station Bodmin Parkway, and it's a 15-minute taxi ride from there. Falmouth can be reached directly from London in five hours. www.rickstein.com/Steins-Fish-and-Chips.html

The Magpie Café, Whitby, North Yorkshire, north England

The Magpie Café, also known as the 'King of the Fish and Chip cafés', has been serving local residents and visitors since the 1940s. Whitby is a beautiful old fishing port situated on the North Yorkshire coast, a little over an hour's drive from the historic city of York, and boasts a maze of narrow streets, alleyways and ruins - and St. Mary's cliff-top churchyard inspired Bram Stoker to write his world-famous book, *Dracula*.

www.magpiecafe.co.uk

Aldeburgh Fish and Chips, Suffolk, east England

There are regular queues around the corner for this shop in the Suffolk coastal town, where composer Benjamin Britten made his home. They attribute their success to the fresh fish, locally grown potatoes and their way of frying that has remained unchanged since 1967. Reach Aldeburgh by car from London in under three hours, or hop on the train from the capital to Ipswich, which takes around an hour, and drive the 45 minutes from there to Aldeburgh. www.aldeburghfishandchips.co.uk

Rock and Sole Plaice, Endell Street, Covent Garden, London

According to the menu, London's third-ever chippy opened on this site in 1871. Today it caters to both office workers and tourists in its popular Covent Garden location, mainly take away as there are just a few tables. www.rockandsoleplaice.com

Anstruther Fish Bar, Anstruther, Fife, south-east Scotland

Local seafood has always been synonymous with Anstruther and, with a legendary reputation that does not disappoint, this shop sells locally caught fish and has won several awards in recent years including UK Fish and Chip Shop of the Year.

www.anstrutherfishbar.co.uk

The Fish & Chip Van: Fisherman's Pier, Tobermory Harbour, Mull, west Scotland

Open from April to October and famous among the yachting community, the fish and chip van is no ordinary chippy - a speciality is fresh scallops landed by the co-owner's son. There's no seating, but lobster creels do the job!



*Fish and chips are available all over Britain.
Credit VisitBritain/Britain on View*

D.Fecchi & Sons, Tenby, Pembrokeshire, west Wales

Established in 1935. Eat in or take-away. One of the few fish and chip shops offering wheat-free fish, coated in a batter of ground rice and potato and fried in its own special frier. Pembrokeshire has become well known for its summertime seafood festival, Fish Week; for seafood lovers it's a must. Take a train from Cardiff to Tenby (via Carmarthen), which will take under three hours. www.pembrokeshirefishweek.co.uk

Enoch's, Llandudno Jct, north Wales

Established in 1969 by a local fish merchant, Enoch's is passionate about sustainable fish, promoting alternatives to cod such as pollack, mackerel and hake, fried in a light and crispy batter using high quality oil. Llandudno is a 60-mile journey from Manchester, and can be reached by car in around 90 minutes. www.enochs.co.uk

Pit Stop Fast Food & Bistro, County Down, Northern Ireland

As Northern Ireland winner of the UK Fish and Chip Shop of the Year 2005 and more recently 2010/2011, the Pitstop serves superb fish and chips as well as a range of other tempting treats. It's located in the village of Kilkeel, in County Down, (a 40-minute drive from the capital, Belfast) where the fishing fleet is the largest in Northern Ireland.

www.pitstopfastfood.com

Long's Fish Restaurant, Belfast, Northern Ireland

Long's in Belfast city centre, close to the Grand Opera House, has been serving its classic chips-with-everything fast-food fodder for almost a century. The wood-panelled walls and formica booths provide an authentic chip shop backdrop for folk who like their food without the fancy trimmings, designer vibe or faux-retro decor.

The Great British Roast

The wonderful aroma of succulent roasting meat, lashings of tasty gravy and soft, fluffy Yorkshires puddings have been part of British food culture for centuries. A traditional Sunday roast dinner lies at the heart of British cooking, as family and friends come together over this most traditional of British meals.

Yet with an increasing number of Brits now finding they have less time to cook a full roast, eateries from five-star restaurants and hotels to gastropubs, traditional pubs and cafés are all serving up a tempting roast dinner on Sundays and, increasingly, on other days of the week, such is its popularity. No visit to Britain is complete without sampling one, so feast your eyes on some award-winning and interesting twists on Sunday roasts in Britain:



On a Sunday, there's nothing better than a warming roast dinner in a cosy pub - make that on any day!

The Spaniards Inn, Hampstead, London

It may be famous for its immortalisation in Charles Dickens' novel *The Pickwick Papers*, its status as one of London's oldest pubs, *and* where One Direction's Harry Styles celebrated his 20th birthday, but The Spaniards Inn is just as famous for its roasts. Serving up goodies such as roasted, 28-day dry-aged, rib-eye of beef with Yorkshire pudding, or slow-roasted Yorkshire pork belly with apple sauce, you'll be as charmed by the meals as you will the idyllic setting of this 16th century pub. www.thespaniardshampstead.co.uk

The Strines Inn, Bradfield, Yorkshire (north England)

How large do you want your roast dinner's accompanying Yorkshire pudding? If the answer is 'substantial' head to The Strines Inn in Bradfield, only a half-hour drive from the bustling city of Sheffield (itself just over two hours by train from London) for a pudding of gigantic proportions. Listed in *The Good Pub Guide 2013*, the pub is housed within a 13th century building and its proximity to the beautiful Peak District National Park means that giant Yorkshire pudding can be easily walked off. <http://thestrinesinn.webs.com>

The Felin Fach Griffin, Brecon Beacons (south Wales)

If you want to stave off the Sunday night blues then it's worth travelling into this beautiful part of Wales - a three-hour drive from London and an hour from the Welsh capital Cardiff - to sample local delicacies on its Sunday lunch menu, such as braised shoulder of Welsh lamb and mackerel with pancetta - and then bed down for the night. The restaurant offers a 'Sunday Sleepover' package, which includes Sunday lunch, supper, accommodation in one of its seven bedrooms and breakfast on Monday. Eating and resting - the perfect Sunday. www.eatdrinksleep.ltd.uk

The West Hill, Brighton (south-east England)

Vegetarians and vegans are well served in the Sunday roast department at the quirkily designed West Hill pub in Brighton (an hour by train from London). Nut roast on the menu is 100% vegan, as are all of its vegetable roast accompaniments, using olive oil, soya

products and maple syrup instead of butter or cream; even the Yorkshire puddings are vegan. Carnivores can still feast on locally reared meats in their roasts, such as Scrumpy cider-roasted Sussex pork with crackling or topside of Sussex beef roasted in red wine.

www.thewesthill.co.uk

Merchant Hotel, Belfast (Northern Ireland)

Grade A-listed Victorian grandeur and Art Deco-inspired interiors surround diners as they enjoy a roast dinner at the five-star Merchant Hotel located in Belfast's historic Cathedral Quarter. Work up an appetite for dining on Sunday lunch gems such as Irish rump of lamb, mushroom fricassee and wilted spinach with a pre-lunch visit to the hotel's luxury boutique Harper, Northern Ireland's only stockist of Valentino, Celine and Christian Louboutin.

Stylish *and* delicious. www.themerchanthotel.com

The Lamplighter, Lake District (north-west England)

Bringing the whole family along for Sunday lunch? Head to the Lamplighter in Windermere, in the heart of Lakes country, where its unique take on serving Sunday lunch is to serve it 'family style'. Choose a cut from its menu of Lakeland meats and it will be served whole to the table with vegetable accompaniments that diners can carve themselves - everyone gets the cut of meat they want. Fresh and fun.

www.lamplighterdiningrooms.com

Blackfriars, Newcastle (north-east England)

Feast on roast beef or lamb in the setting of a former Dominican refectory and get a real feel of a medieval monastery while you're tucking into the locally sourced, seasonal produce. While the atmosphere is historic, the food is certainly not - the restaurant was voted as one of the top restaurants in Britain for Sunday lunch by *The Independent* last year and is included in the Michelin and Harden guides. www.blackfriarsrestaurant.co.uk

Tibbie Shiels Inn, Selkirk (Scottish Borders)

Another winner in *The Independent's* top 50 roast dinners, the Tibbie Shiels Inn in Selkirk, on the Scottish Borders, sources meat for its Sunday roasts from one of Scotland's leading small beef farms, Hardiesmill. Literary fans will be delighted to hear that this historic wayside inn, overlooking the picturesque St Mary's Loch, was once frequented by playwright and poet Sir Walter Scott. Other names appearing in the visitor books include *Treasure Island* author Robert Louis Stevenson. A literary and culinary treat.

www.tibbieshiels.com

The Magic Garden, Battersea, London

Described as 'a boutique festival indoors with all the laughs and none of the mud', the Magic Garden - nestled in south London's affluent Battersea area - serves up solid Sunday roast fare including free range corn-fed Suffolk roast chicken, rib-eye roast beef and the not-so-traditional oven-baked sea bass served with a lobster sauce. Cool yet comfortable, diners can enjoy the sounds of bands and DJs that have toured on the festival circuit while lounging in the eclectically styled garden. www.magicgardenpub.com

The West House, Biddenden, Kent (south-east England)

Michelin-star cooking equals Sunday lunch with style; diners visiting the West House - situated in a 15th century weaver's cottage in Kent, around 90 minutes' drive from London - can enjoy inventive Sunday cuisine that has, in the past, served exciting twists on the traditional roast. Chef Graham Garrett presents an ever-changing menu that has included dishes such as chorizo roast loin, rabbit and squid rillettes and pork shoulder, confit cheek, braised faggot, quince, buttered cabbage www.thewesthouserestaurant.co.uk

Roast dinner facts

Did you know...?

The French have called the British 'les rosbifs' (roast beefs) since the 18th century, such is the British love of beef!

In 1871 William Kitchener, author of *The Cook's Oracle*, recommended eating 3 kg (6lb) of meat each week as part of a healthy diet (he also recommended 2 kilos of bread and a pint of beer every day, so probably wouldn't have been recommended by today's nutritionists!)

The method of hanging a large joint of meat on a spit or, in the 19th century suspended from a bottle-jack, required a large fireplace and would be enough to feed a large household not only on the Sunday but in pies and stews throughout the week

The less wealthy would drop off their smaller joints at the bakers to be cooked in the cooling bread ovens - bread was not baked on a Sunday - on their way to church and pick it up on their return

The first recorded recipe for the accompanying Yorkshire pudding was in 1737 when it was called 'A Dripping Pudding', the dripping coming from spit-roast meat

2012 saw the launch of the inaugural British Roast Dinner Week, celebrating all that's great about the roast. To find out about this year's week-long celebration visit www.unileverfoodsolutions.co.uk/promotions/roast_dinner

'Sing for your supper' -forage, fish and source-your-own



Out and about with The Fat Hen in Cornwall

More restaurants across Britain offer farm-to-plate menus - where the ingredients used in their dishes can be easily traced to where they were locally produced; it's a sustainable and environmentally friendly option. But you can now take it one step further - finding and preparing the food yourself. It allows participants to understand the sights, tastes and smells of our environment. With a steady stream of food-fetching experiences appearing across the destination, from the deepest countryside hedgerows to unlikely urban settings, this 'get back to nature' option is both palatable

and educational.

Foraging

Humans once foraged - gathering food from nature - on a regular basis, and the experience is growing in popularity again. There is a huge variety of foraging courses on offer, but it's best to book with a self-taught expert, particularly as Britain has intricate laws on land ownership. Down in **Canterbury, Kent** in south-east England, around 90 minutes by train from London, wild food experimentalist Fergus Drennan leads 12-hour long courses involving searches for edible plants, seaweeds and fungi. Advice on pickling, smoking and salting is also provided, while meals double as cookery demonstrations.

<http://fergustheforager.co.uk>

For gourmet foraging weekends the Fat Hen in **Cornwall**, south-west England - run by sustainable-living guru Caroline Davey - involves the guests in making elderberry cocktails and nettle frittata ahead of a Saturday-night candlelit feast. Children-focused courses are also available for families looking to educate their offspring on wild food. The nearest train station is Penzance, a five-and-a-half-hour journey from London. www.fathen.org



Foraging with the Fat Hen shows you the beauty of the Cornish countryside and involves cocktails and a candlelit feast

And in Northern Ireland's capital **Belfast**, Mary and Dermot Hughes run a variety of seasonal foraging courses. Topics include 'edible flowers' in June; 'fruit: jams, jellies and desserts' from August to October and 'wines and sloe gin' from August to November. Flights to Belfast take just over an hour from London. <http://forageireland.com>

Specialist foraging

Many foraging courses concentrate on one particular area of interest. Foraging company Taste the Wild, for example, has launched a specialist vegetarian course which, dependent on the season, can involve making dandelion bhajis or cheese using vegetable rennet. The course is based near the market town of Boroughbridge in **North Yorkshire**, north England, half an hour's drive from Leeds and its international airport.

www.tastethewild.co.uk



Learn about edible wild plants with a Taste the Wild vegetarian foraging course

Fungi fans should head to **Hampshire**, south England for a day (around 90 minutes by train from London to the nearest station of Lymington) and take Mrs Tee's Wild Mushrooms course in the beautiful New Forest. Brigitte Tee is a knowledgeable mycologist (fungi expert) and supplies numerous Michelin-starred restaurants - including London's Nobu and Le Gavroche - with mushrooms, and has formerly taught the Queen's chefs. www.wildmushrooms.co.uk

Bushcraft

Bushcraft means total outdoor subsistence without even so much as a tent. Eating is obviously a key part of that, and courses run by Outdoors@Hay concentrate on the skills required; specifically, finding food and potable water.

Outdoors@Hay runs in **Wales'** vast Brecon Beacons reserve, about an hour's drive from Cardiff; its wild landscape makes it ideal territory for bushcraft activities. www.training-activities.co.uk

British adventurer and TV presenter Bear Grylls oversees a Survival Academy that runs demanding bushcraft courses, such as a five-day summer challenge in the Alladale Wilderness Reserve, up in **Scotland's** north-east. Tuition in filtering water and installing fishing traps is included before a 36-hour expedition that even Grylls admits "may hurt a little." Good for people looking for an outdoor challenge. The nearest airport is Inverness, a two-hour flight from London, or it's three-and-a-half hours by train from Edinburgh.

<http://beargryllssurvivalacademy.com>

Active

Canoes are the mode of transport in **Devonshire** for an energetic trip along the River Dart in search of south-west England's seasonal plants. Later, pick up tips on how to best scoff the shrubs before returning to Totnes, a charming town famous for its stoic resistance to chain shops (www.wildwise.co.uk).



Cruise along the River Dart and pick up seasonal greens for your supper

Landlubbers may prefer a Wild Food Cycling Day, again courtesy of Fat Hen in **Cornwall**. The 20 miles covered will take you to the seaside and back, and strong thighs are required (www.fathen.org)

Fishing

In the rugged north of **Scotland**, the Sutherland region boasts some of the country's finest salmon fishing every spring. Based on the picturesque River Shin near Lairg, around a six-hour train ride from Edinburgh, guests can take part in three-day courses run by fly fishing expert Tom Bell, taking as many lessons as required plus a personal ghillie - the angling equivalent of a caddy in golf - for each participant. <http://bellflyfishing.co.uk>

Just a couple of hours from London by train, The Bell Inn in the coastal village of Walberswick in **Suffolk**, east England, is the starting point for a Catch-and-Cook excursion and is ideal for amateurs. Aboard a specially chartered boat, you'll fish for cod and skate among North Sea wrecks. Back at The Bell Inn chef Nick Attfield will transform your catch into a delicious supper. www.foodsafari.co.uk

Coastal

Britain's coastlines are bursting with edible goods; you just have to know where to look. On the coast of **Cumbria** in England's north-west, Taste the Wild runs two-day coastal courses: foragers can root out edible plants in salt marshes, and search for Morecambe Bay shrimps. Cooking demonstrations are included. The nearest station is Cark & Cartmel, a two-hour train journey from Manchester. www.tastethewild.co.uk

Lobsters are a highlight on the coast of **North Wales**. Overlooking the beautiful Llandudno Bay, the St George's Hotel can arrange bespoke lobster safaris: two-hour evening trips by potting boat with a qualified marine biologist, followed by culinary tips back at base. Llandudno can be reached in just over two hours by train from Manchester. www.stgeorgeswales.co.uk

Back down in south England, **Dorset's** sandy Studland Bay is a perfect place for seaweed-scavenging courses. Participants head out on kayaks, enabling the foragers to pick up dulse (an edible red seaweed), sea spaghetti and other greens from the stacks and sea caves at Old Harry Rocks. Recipe advice rounds off the day. The nearest station is Poole, which is just over two hours by fast train from London. www.studlandseaschool.co.uk

Urban

You don't need to be on the coast or countryside for a spot of foraging; it's also possible in a city environment. In **Edinburgh**, Robin Harford, creator of one of Britain's leading wild-food websites, Eat Weeds, leads one-day courses that conclude in the award-winning Wedgwood restaurant for a three-course meal using your finds as ingredients. www.foragingcourses.com

British classics

Pick-your-own farms are a classic British tradition: large estates where visitors can personally pluck berries, fruits and vegetables - and it's a fun treat for families. In the **Vale of Glamorgan, south Wales** (less than half an hour's drive from Cardiff), Hendrewennol offers all of the above, plus homemade ice cream and a Strawberry Festival every July. www.hendrewennol.com

Cider fans can see how their favourite tippie is made during autumn courses at Upper Neatham Mill Farm, near Alton in **Hampshire**, south England, an easy day-trip from London (just over an hour by train). Advice on how to select, pick and press apples will be forthcoming (<http://upperneatham.co.uk>). At the same time of year, **Devon's** Bovey Castle, on Dartmoor, provides lessons in making gin with local sloe berries. The nearest station is Exeter St Davids, under a three-hour train journey from London. www.boveycastle.com

Vegetarian dining in Britain

Meat and two veg? A bacon sandwich? Forget the traditional look back to British cuisine - vegetarian dining is now better than ever. Whether you've chosen to omit meat on moral grounds, a concern for food safety, or perhaps for health, religious or cultural reasons, there's more choice than ever for meat-free dining across Britain. Even if you've taken it a step further and cut out all animal products (eggs and dairy) for a vegan diet, the venues we've listed below will always have something tempting on the menu.

With **London** one of the world's culinary capitals, it's no surprise that it also boasts the largest selection and variety of veggie venues in Britain. In London's West End, the tiny tucked-away alleyway Heddon Street, off Regent Street, has wall-to-wall fashionable dining and nightlife venues. But you don't have to wear your best designer gear at Swiss-owned **Tibits**. This informal vegetarian restaurant has a buffet with a selection of 40 homemade vegetarian and vegan salads, hot dishes, tasty soups and tempting puds. Choose your food, and get your plate weighed at the check-out - and pay what it weighs. And you can go back as many times as you like (www.tibits.ch).

Head to North London's indie music and edgy fashion hub Camden, famous for the famous labyrinthine market, and where music meets food at **Green Note**. This tiny independent acoustic music venue hosts live music each night, plus little wooden tables in the front café end serving homemade veggie tapas from artisan chefs and bakers; eat here before heading into the back for live blues, folk or world music (www.greennote.co.uk).

From London it's an easy day trip of 60 miles (97km) north to **Cambridge**, university town extraordinaire packed with ancient, majestic colleges. You'll probably be dining alongside students at the quaint basement Rainbow Café, all pine tables and white stone walls, with pure vegetarian with some vegan and dairy-free dishes. Enjoy delicious soups, quiches and cakes for a hearty lunch, washed down with vegan wines - not many people know that such things exist. (www.rainbowcafe.co.uk)

Around 60 miles (97km) south of London and you're in the vibrant seaside resort of **Brighton**, which has long been a venue for a party-loving crowd flocking to its pebbled shoreline. It's also known for its bohemian, hedonistic edge - and one where vegetarian culture fits right in. **Terre A Terre** brings fine dining to the vegetarian scene - more indulgence than abstinence. Feast on imaginative dishes that are pure poetry: soft sake-baked aubergine with tahini, or buttermilk-soaked halloumi with vodka-spiked plum tomatoes. (www.terreaterre.co.uk)

If you're inspired to take home some vegetarian skills (and taste) with you, take the 90-minute train journey from London southwest to **Bath**, home to the superbly restored Roman baths and graceful Georgian architecture. At **Demuths Vegetarian Cookery School**, you can learn from leading vegetarian chef Rachel Demuth along with experienced tutors; choose from half-day and evening



Head to Terre a Terre, in bustling Brighton, for delicious fine dining vegetarian food



Delicious, meat-free. Eat vegetarian at Terre a Terre, Brighton

sessions to learn from the experts how to cook with local produce. Then settle down afterwards to enjoy the fruits of your labour along with your fellow students and teachers. (www.vegetariancookeryschool.com)

From Bath, head 55 miles (89km) west over the Bristol Channel and you're in **Cardiff**, the capital of Wales. Try the award-winning **Vegetarian Food Studio** (www.vegetarianfoodstudio.co.uk): tasty Indian dishes are on the menu at purse-friendly prices, from authentic street food - *chaat* - originating in Bombay, to South India's famous *masala dosa*.

When Cranks began in London's fashionable Carnaby Street in the Swinging Sixties, it was one of the nation's first wholefood vegetarian restaurants, later to become a national chain. Now, the only remaining branch is **Cranks Garden Restaurant** in the delightful town of Totnes in Devon on the south west coast, a cosy café housed in the Cider Press Centre for home-cooked organic food (www.crank.co.uk).

You'll often find a good meat-free selection on the menu in most Indian restaurants, as strict Hindus don't eat any meat or fish. In the Northern English city of Leeds, Gujarati cuisine comes to Yorkshire at **Hansa's**, run by an all-woman team led by Hansa Dabhi. Here, you can sample tangy pumpkin curry and creamy lentil dhal - and there's even a special vegan menu also (www.hansasrestaurant.com).

York, close to Leeds and only a 2 hour train trip from London, is famed for its cobbled shopping street The Shambles and gothic Minster. Find a more contemporary side of the city at Spanish-owned **El Piano** - its other branches are in Malaga and Granada. Its vegan, gluten-free menu is created from organic, sustainable ingredients - wholesome delights with Spanish and South American influences such as Bolivian patty of carrot and leeks, and tofu grilled with creamy green peppercorn sauce (www.el-piano.com).

Head to the buzzing North Eastern city of **Manchester**, only 2 hours by train from London or an hour and a half from York, where the trendy Northern Quarter is a hub of design studios, art galleries and vintage shops wrapped up in urban cool. It's the perfect neighbourhood for **V Revolution** the city's first vegan 'junk food' café - a fun venue where you can take a seat in a red booth and get your teeth into towering burgers and hot dogs - meat free of course (www.vrevolution.co.uk).

Less than two hours' drive from Manchester is Grasmere, the Lake District village famed as being the home of William Wordsworth when he wrote his famous 'Daffodils' poem. Grasmere is also home to **Lancrigg**, a vegetarian country house hotel. With Wordsworth connections (and many more links to famous people besides), it's inspiring in more ways than one. The food served is creative, delicious and 100% vegetarian, but it's the atmosphere and service that make Lancrigg special and will make you want to go back. <http://lancrigg.co.uk>

Scotland's perky capital **Edinburgh**, famed for its summer-long arts and drama festivals and brooding hilltop castle, is an elegantly historic city. There's an earthy, student-like vibe (thanks to its huge university) in subterranean restaurant Henderson's which has attracted a loyal following - hardly surprising, as this pioneer of meat-free dining has been going for half a century (www.hendersonsofedinburgh.co.uk).



David Bann in Glasgow is an award-winning meat-free option for vegetarians and omnivores alike!

A relative newcomer to the dining scene, Edinburgh's old town hosts **David Bann**, the eponymous restaurant for the award-winning Glasgow-born chef. Here, aubergine-coloured richly painted walls host some nouvelle cuisine and beautifully presented world cuisine which has won him plaudits from vegetarians and omnivores alike (www.davidbann.com).

The charming, rough-round-the-edges city of **Glasgow**, 55 miles west from Edinburgh, won the unlikely title of best vegan city in Britain according to anti-animal cruelty campaign group PETA. And this, in a city infamous for its deep-fried Mars Bars! But dip into **Stereo**, a super-cool performance space and club in a building designed by local architect ace Rennie Mackintosh. You'll have live music along with a vegan menu delivering the likes of haggis fritters (a meat-free variation of the famous Scottish delicacy) and tepenade flatbread (www.stereocafebar.com).

Recent years have seen exciting new chefs come to Belfast, capital of Northern Ireland, and it's to the authentic décor of Arcana, reputedly Northern Ireland's best Indian restaurant, where vegetarian diners head - even though it's not exclusively meat free. Feast on a Super Thali - a plate with five different curries, rice, pakora and naan bread, filling and delicious - where even your meat-eating fellow diners will be tempted, on this occasion, to opt for the veggie menu (www.archana.co.uk).

Fantastic 'free-from' food

As anyone with a food allergy knows, eating out can be something of a risky business. Until recently, few restaurants and cafés understood the risks of cross-contamination, and gluten-free and dairy-free options could be hard to find. But things are changing, and many places - from traditional pubs to tearooms to hotel dining rooms - now offer 'free from' menus, which mean a real choice for those with allergies or intolerances.

Some of Britain's best-known 'chain' restaurants, from Pizza Express to Carluccios and Strada, all offer gluten-free pasta and pizza and guarantee their 'free from' dishes are safe from cross contamination. www.pizzaexpress.co.uk, www.carluccios.co.uk, www.strada.co.uk

If making a hotel or restaurant reservation, always mention any dietary requirements in advance, as most places will happily make changes to their menu options. And, if you're self-catering or looking for picnic ingredients, markets can often be a great hunting ground for gluten-free goods; there are many wheat-free bakeries around Britain that sell at different farmers' markets.

In **London** there is an excellent choice of 'free from' places to eat. At Borough Market on the South Bank, the **Free From Bakehouse** serves sweet and savoury tarts, muffins, cakes and biscuits, all hand-made and all gluten-free, with some products also dairy-free and sugar and egg-free (www.thefreefrombakehouse.com).

Burger-lovers should pay a visit to one of the **Honest Burger** eateries, located in Soho, Brixton, Camden, Kings Cross and Portobello, where the



The Blue Lion Pub in Cambridge offers sumptuous seasonal gluten free dishes



Burger buns needn't be out of bounds - Honest Burgers makes them without gluten

burgers are rusk-free and there are gluten-free buns on the menu (www.honestburgers.co.uk). And at Fortnum & Mason, London's oldest and one of its most elegant food stores, a gluten-free afternoon tea is now available, with finger sandwiches, hand-made scones and slices of rich chocolate cake (www.fortnumandmason.com). Cup-cake fans should head north of the river Thames to chic Hampstead, where **Bake-a-boo** is a wonderfully kitsch teashop, specialising in 'free-from' cakes and treats (www.bake-a-boo.com).

Gastropubs

The new breed of gastropubs - traditional British inns with a focus on local produce and home-cooking - regularly offer menus that include an excellent range of gluten-free options. **The Blue Lion Pub** in Hardwick near Cambridge, east England, offers a separate gluten-free menu that changes

seasonally, and is around a ten-minute taxi journey from city centre, itself one hour from London Kings Cross by train (www.bluelionhardwick.co.uk). In

Cornwall, south-west England, the picturesque **Pandora Inn**, which dates back to the 13th century, has dairy and gluten-free menus offering home-smoked chicken salad or scallops and black pudding. The pub can be reached by water taxi from Falmouth, which is just over five hours from London Paddington (www.pandorainn.com). The

Shoulder of Mutton in the village of Kirkby Overblow, near Harrogate in

Yorkshire, north England, has a separate gluten-free menu, including a wonderful choice of tempting deserts, from sticky ginger pudding to fruit crumble.

(www.shoulderofmuttonharrogate.co.uk). Harrogate is just under three hours by train from London Kings Cross by train.



The Pandora Inn in Cornwall is a gastropub that caters excellently, and deliciously, to all requirements

Tea-rooms

Even traditional tea-rooms are increasingly offering good gluten-free ranges. In the beautiful **Cotswolds** area (around 90-minutes' drive from London), there are several to choose from; **Mrs T Potts**, in the pretty Cotswolds village of Moreton in Marsh, specialises in dairy and wheat-free dishes, ranging from cakes to vegetarian lasagne, while **The Old Bakery Tearoom** in Stow on the Wold is famous for home-made gluten-free scones that mean even coeliacs can enjoy a traditional English cream tea (www.mrstpotts.co.uk, www.theoldbakerytearoom.co.uk).

And in the Welsh capital **Cardiff's** elegant Royal Arcade, the **Plan Café** specialises in gluten-free sandwiches, soya milk coffees and other wheat and dairy-free dishes (www.royalandmorganarcades.co.uk/shops/the-plan).

Restaurants

Scotland's cities offer an excellent choice of restaurants catering for coeliacs and those with food intolerances; in **Edinburgh**, the home-made soups, burgers, risottos and steaks at **Roseleaf** - a lively café bar in the Leith area, a ten-minute taxi ride from the Royal Mile - are all gluten and dairy-free. Or you can choose from a wide range of gluten-free risottos, pizza and pasta at **Vittorio's on the Bridge**, situated on George IV Bridge in the heart of the Old Town (www.roseleaf.co.uk, www.vittoriagroup.co.uk).

There are equally good options in **Glasgow**; the wonderfully quirky **Butterfly and Pig** offers a good range of gluten-free options that include fish and chips and home-made, gluten-free bread. There are two branches, one on Bath Street and one on Partick Bridge Street (www.thebutterflyandthepig.com). In **Northern Ireland**, the two branches of **Made in Belfast**, both in central Belfast, offer all sandwiches made with gluten-free bread, while



The Cloth Ear in Belfast offers a separate gluten free menu, so you don't have to trawl through looking for a 'GF' sign!

the **Cloth Ear** - part of the Merchant Hotel - has a standalone gluten-free menu, including a homemade seafood chowder with gluten-free bread, steaks and burgers (www.madinbelfast.ni.com, www.themerchanthotel.com).

Hotel breakfasts

Often one of the biggest problems for those with allergies, is finding a 'free-from' breakfast when staying in a hotel or bed and breakfast. However, the **Marine Hotel Ballycastle** - which overlooks the beautiful north coast beaches of Ireland - is accredited by Coeliac UK and serves a wide range of 'free-from' dishes. Ballycastle is around 90 minutes' drive north of Belfast (www.marinehotelballycastle.com).

In Spey, Scotland (around 2.5 hours' drive north of Edinburgh and Glasgow, every aspect of the menu - from canapés to cheeses - can be tailored to gluten-free diets at **Culdearn House** in Spey, Scotland if the kitchen is notified in advance (www.culdearn.com). While in north Wales, at the **Castlebank Hotel** in Conwy, close to the spectacular landscapes of Snowdonia and just two hours' train journey from Manchester, hearty breakfasts come not just with gluten-free bread but gluten-free sausages too (www.castlebankhotel.co.uk).

One of the most unusual gluten-free friendly restaurants is the **Star Bistro** in **Cheltenham**, south-west England, around two hours by train from London Paddington. The bistro brings together staff from the Wiggly Worm - a charity - with underprivileged young people, to cook simple, delicious dishes that use the best local produce. Hugely popular, reservations are essential and there is a fantastic choice of 'free-from' dishes (www.natstar.ac.uk/drupal/content/star-bistro).

For more information on gluten-free places to eat and stay visit www.go-gluten-free-wheat-free.co.uk

Great and green eating experiences

Walk into any dining pub or restaurant in Britain, flip over its menu and you're as likely as not to find a list of the local farmers, fishermen and cheese makers who have supplied its kitchen. As we become increasingly conscious of the many miles food often travels before hitting our plates, we're beginning to demand more ethical, local sourcing. Plus, that apple pie simply tastes better when it's been made with the just-picked fruit of a neighbouring orchard rather than an air freighted, over-chilled mega crop.

Fortunately there are now plenty of cafes and restaurants in Britain where you can eat well without harming the planet, and find expertly made regional specialities. If you want to get even closer to the raw ingredients, food tourism is booming with plenty of operators now offering fishing trips, foraging tours and cookery courses focusing on traditional, low-carbon culinary skills.

Fish and chips, Aberdeenshire, north-east Scotland

For many visitors to Britain, prime position on any British bucket list goes to trying fish and chips. We all know they're best sprinkled generously with salt and vinegar and eaten straight from the wrapping. Less well known is that the traditional fish supper is under threat from over-fishing. You can find out how committed Britain's restaurants and cafes are to using sustainably sourced fish through the Fish2Fork website. Or make your way to The Bay Fish & Chip Shop, in the historic harbour town of Stonehaven, less than 20 minutes by train from the city of Aberdeen, and tuck into MSC-certified sustainable Scottish haddock, and chips hewn from local potatoes.

www.fish2fork.com www.thebayfishandchips.co.uk



Poco in Bristol is fun, buzzing, tasty - and Britain's best ethical restaurant, says The Observer

Small plates with big hearts, Bristol, south-west England

That Poco was recently named best ethical restaurant in Britain by *The Observer* came as no surprise to the Sustainable Restaurant Association, a London-based not-for-profit membership organisation that rates restaurants globally for their sustainability and has given the restaurant an overall score of 87%, one of its highest. The name may mean small in Spanish but the tapas-style flavours at this Bristol city hotspot are locally inspired, with dishes such as rhubarb and pork tagine, Plymouth squid and chips and scrambled eggs with mutton merguez and harissa.

www.eatpoco.com www.thesra.org

Supper and conversation, Devon, south-west England

Recently set up by Romy Fraser, founder of the Neals Yard Remedies organic beauty brand, Trill Farm is set among rolling fields and woodlands in east Devon, a five-minute drive from the market town Axminster, with its direct train link to London. An education centre and small business hub, with guest accommodation on site, the farm's regular programme of workshops and courses includes



Green credentials, but you'll get much more than green on your plate at Trill Farm, Devon

monthly 'supper and conversation' evenings. Join one and you can tuck into the likes of homemade crab cakes with fresh herb mayonnaise, lemon tart and rhubarb sorbet while putting the world to rights on a theme inspired by the evening's guest speaker.

www.trillfarm.co.uk

Dosa making, Birmingham, central England

Tom Baker set up his community bakery, Loaf, in Britain's second largest city in 2009, aiming to promote "real" food, not least authentic, traditional, artisan breads made with a low environmental impact. So successful was it that he's since opened a cookery school. Courses range from basic kitchen skills to handmade pasta workshops as well as bread classes. With a nod to Birmingham's large British Asian population, one of Loaf's most interesting classes is its three-hour dosa-making lessons. Sign up and you'll learn how to put together this South Indian speciality, and its traditional fillings, like a pro.

www.loafonline.co.uk/cookeryschool

Seafood in a day, Suffolk, east England

A low-lying rural county just over an hour's train ride from London, its big skies and much-painted coastline give Suffolk a romantic peacefulness. It's easy to appreciate this on Food Safari's 'Seafood In A Day' course. Based in the small coastal town of Orford, the programme includes a behind-the-scenes tour of one of Suffolk's best-loved smoked fish and oyster producers, Pinney's of Orford, as well as a lobster- and crab-fishing trip on the River Ore and a showcase fish lunch at The Butley Orford Oysterage restaurant, learning how to shuck oysters and carve whole smoked salmon along the way.

www.foodsafari.co.uk/course/seafood-in-a-day

Pop-up brunch, London

Fancy starting the day with Eggs Rothko? Shakshuka? Or good old sausages and scrambled eggs made with Clarence Court blue Cotswold Legbar eggs and rare breed meats from the Franconian Sausage Company? Then find out where in London the Good Egg's pop-up brunches - made with delicious, sustainable produce - will be appearing at the weekend and join the queue. For other ethical eats in the capital, make sure you sign up to London Food Link's newsletter, Jellied Eel, which has its finger firmly on the city's ethical eating pulse.

<http://thegoodeggco.com> www.sustainweb.org/jelliedeel

Hyper-local menus, Cardigan, west Wales

The 25 Mile in Cardigan, a picturesque little town 90 minutes' bus ride from the pint-sized Pembrokeshire city of St David's (Britain's smallest city), is a restaurant that does what its name suggests - sourcing produce for its sophisticated menus from within an extremely tight radius. As the home of Howies and Hiut denim, Cardigan is at the forefront of the trend for modern British sustainable style and the chefs at this small bistro-style restaurant are leading the way. Try the Pedigree Pork Rillettes with local apple chutney or the line-caught wild bass with nuts and spices.

www.the25mile.com

Taste Le Tour, Yorkshire, north England

One of a series of food trails that aims to show visitors the wealth of produce in the agricultural county of Yorkshire - and the craftsmanship that goes into it - this one is a cycling tour. Starting in the ancient city of York and following much of the route the Tour de France's Le Grande Départ will take as it kicks off in Yorkshire in July 2014, the two-day trip takes in quintessential Yorkshire Dales scenery (think grassy green fields, dry-stone walls and historic stone barns) as well as visits to local charcuterie, butter, trout and cordial producers. Cookery demonstrations, wine tastings, meals at some of Yorkshire's best-loved gastropubs and a night at an elegant country house hotel, Simonstone Hall, are also included.

www.yorkshirefoodfinder.org/trails/taste-le-tour

A breakfast for ethical champions, Belfast, Northern Ireland

On the leafy outskirts of Northern Ireland's capital, Belfast, Culloden Estate and Spa was built in 1846 as a private home. Now a hotel, head chef Paul McKnight is known for



Sumptuous, gourmet... and green. Belfast's Culloden Estate ticks all the boxes

reworking local dishes such as champ (mashed potatoes with spring onions) and has instigated 100% local breakfasts. What better way to start the day than with apple juice from Armagh Cider Company's orchards, yoghurt from the Clandeboye Estate's Jersey cows, sausages from locally reared rare breed pigs or porridge made with local oats (and a tot of Bushmills whiskey if you need a kick-start)?

www.hastingshotels.com

Gourmet camping, Isle of Skye, north-west Scotland

Join one of Skye Wilderness Safaris' glamping weekends on the Isle of Skye - a six-hour drive from Edinburgh or Glasgow - and experience gourmet food around a campfire. The two-day trips involve walks through some of the island's most dramatic terrain, either on the Trotternish Ridge or the Cuillin Mountains by day, and sleeping out in stylish, cosy bell tents by night. Along the way, guests are fuelled by local, seasonal, sustainable food made by a private chef. Expect breakfasts of kedgeree laced with artisan-smoked fish and local free-range eggs and dinners of barbecued local lamb or langoustines.

www.skye-wilderness-safaris.com

Sustainable Destination Restaurants

Whether you have an appetite for the sophisticated cooking of Raymond Blanc or the earthier kitchen wizardry of Tim Bouget, Britain's restaurants are at the top of their game when it comes to culinary innovation. So it's no surprise that dedicated foodies are happy to travel the length of the country to seek out its finest destination restaurants.

These days it's not just the chefs' expertise they come for, however, but their rigorous sourcing. With demand for local, seasonal produce at an all-time high, every kitchen worth its salt now has an eye on sustainability; when two Michelin star L'Enclume has established its own farm to furnish its diners with hyper-fresh produce you know you're onto a good thing.

Restaurant Andrew Fairlie, Gleneagles, Perthshire, central Scotland

Scottish-born but French-trained, Andrew Fairlie won the first Roux scholarship, allowing him to train with chef Michel Guerard in Gascony. Now back on home soil he has run his eponymous restaurant for over a decade at the historic Gleneagles Hotel in Perthshire, reachable by train direct from Glasgow in just over 45 minutes. Fairlie's skills here have earned him two Michelin stars. Ignoring trends in favour of what he knows best - flavourful food made with produce gleaned from the farms, moors and forests that surround him, as well as the country's coastline - his signature dish is smoked lobster, infused over whisky barrels for 12 hours. www.andrewfairlie.co.uk

The Ethicurean, Wrington, south-west England

As hip as it is wholesome, this stylishly rustic restaurant is a half-hour drive from the city of Bristol. Set in a former orangery within a walled kitchen garden it is largely a place for lunching (dinner is served only on Fridays and Saturdays). The sourcing for typical dishes, such as 12-hour pork belly with fondant potato, cavolo nero, pickled apple, mushroom and chipotle crackling salt, is rigorous. Meats are from free-range livestock, fish is responsibly sourced and the apple juice is so fresh it comes from the restaurant's own (unsprayed) orchards. www.theethicurean.com

Le Manoir aux Quat' Saisons, Great Milton, south-east England



Le Manoir aux Quat' Saisons, where you'll find works of art on your plate, much of which comes from the garden

Reachable from London within an hour by train and taxi, chef Raymond Blanc's showcase Oxfordshire retreat has food so close to its two-Michelin star heart that it cultivates its own two-acre kitchen garden. Throw in elegant Anglo-French cooking based around firm ethical and seasonal principles - typical dishes include warm confit of Cornish cod with red pepper and chorizo, parsley and cockle vinaigrette - and a raft of alternative vegetarian menus for non-meat eaters and it's little wonder that Le Manoir won the Sustainable Restaurant Association's 2014 Sustainable Hotel Restaurant of the Year Award. www.manoir.com

The Royal Oak, Berkshire, south-east England

It may look every inch a typical 17th-century coaching inn from the outside but this Berkshire pub, 45 minutes by train and taxi from London, is no traditional British pub. Not only does its restaurant lay claim to a Michelin star - and one of the most glamorous beer

(and vegetable) gardens in the country - but the modern British menus here show great dedication to sustainability. Dishes such as Somerset smoked eel with fried duck egg and morels, and Yorkshire rhubarb trifle, are a witty play on timeless pub cooking but the produce in them is also scrupulously sourced from seasonal British suppliers.

www.theroyaloakpaleystreet.com

Ninth Wave, Mull, north-west Scotland

The small Inner Hebridean island of Mull might sound a long way to go for dinner (from Glasgow it's a three-hour train journey followed by a 45-minute ferry crossing) but it's worth it. The island's rich history and fabulous wildlife have long made it one of Scotland's best-loved destinations and this dinner-only restaurant is putting it on the food map too. A renovated 200 year-old cottage with a sophisticated dining room, Ninth Wave serves menus made with produce sourced from the surrounding seas, hills and kitchen garden. Dishes such as pan-seared local red gurnard fillet with sea urchin and sorrel mousse, sea lettuce, homemade linguini and Vermouth sauce are served alongside distinctive organic and biodynamic wines. www.ninthwaverestaurant.co.uk

Café ODE, Devon, south-west England



Café ODE in Devon - small on fuss, big on flavour, and sustainable to boot

Just around the headland from the sleepy seaside village of Shaldon in Devon, three hours from London by train, this beachside restaurant is small on fuss but big on flavour. A casual, family friendly alternative to owner Tim Bouget's more sophisticated restaurant, ODE Dining, Café ODE remains true to the Michel Roux-trained chef's culinary cornerstones of locally inspired, refined dining with strong environmental values. Timeless British favourites are the order of the day, be that fish and chips (sustainably caught and either swaddled in ODE ale batter or char-grilled) or local strawberries and cream.

www.odetruefood.com

Tyddyn Llan, Llandrillo, north Wales

It's little surprise that this off-the-beaten-track food lover's favourite is a restaurant with rooms. Once you've covered the three-hour journey here by train and bus from Britain's second-largest city, Birmingham, you'll want to spend some time soaking up the spectacular Welsh landscape around it as well as working up an appetite for its sublime, Michelin-star cooking. Most of the food on Tyddyn Llan's menu is seasonal and locally sourced; order the home-cured bresaola of Welsh Black beef and it will have come from a local estate, the wild bass with laverbread *beurre blanc* from the Welsh coastline.

www.tyddynllan.co.uk



Michelin-starred, seasonal and sustainable - Tyddyn Llan in north Wales

L'Enclume, Cumbria, north-west England

One of the most innovative chefs in Britain, Simon Rogan oversees two renowned restaurants in Manchester and will fill the Gordon Ramsay-shaped gap at Claridge's in May when he opens a new restaurant there, Fera. Further north, however, he's long been making culinary waves at L'Enclume, his two Michelin-star restaurant in the pretty village of Cartmel, on the southern fringes of the Lake District. Dishes such as potatoes rolled in onion ash and cod "yolk" (actually cod mousse disguised as an egg) make theatrical statements but the ingredients are as simple and sustainable as they come: vegetables, herbs, fruit and flowers are from Rogan's own 12-acre farm. www.simonrogan.co.uk



The garden at beautiful and sustainable L'Enclume in Cumbria, north west England

OX, Belfast, Northern Ireland

Overlooking the River Lagan, OX opened last year bringing a blast of fresh, modern, affordable cooking to the Northern Ireland capital. Against a semi-industrial backdrop of painted brick walls, simple but classy wooden furniture and skinny pendant lighting, beautifully presented plates are dressed with the likes of milk curd, radish, red pepper caramel and bergamot or Skeaghanore duck with hazelnut, wild garlic, crosnes and Earl Grey. Exciting and ethical in equal measure, the food here is an urbane celebration of seasonal eating. www.oxbelfast.com

Samuel's Restaurant, Swinton Park, Yorkshire, north England



Proving that 'sustainable' can mean splendour, Yorkshire's Swinton Park is a glamorous and green place to stay

On the edge of the rolling green fields and drystone walls of the Yorkshire Dales, 90 minutes' journey by train and bus from the ancient city of York, Swinton Park is a traditional country hotel with modern green sensibilities. Powered by a woodchip boiler, it is committed to minimising food miles, helped in no small way by the restoration of the estate's walled garden. Take a seat in the hotel's Samuel's Restaurant and order the Garden Produce Menu made with ingredients sourced exclusively from the hotel's grounds; typical dishes include goats' cheese with heritage beetroot, lemon and hazelnut truffle dressing. www.swintonpark.com

Excellent organic restaurants

We pick five organic restaurants worth heading to - for foodies who like to eat well, knowing food is free from nasties.

1. Bangors Organic, Bude, Cornwall, south-west England

One of only three Soil Association-certified bed and breakfasts in Britain, you don't have to stay at Bangors to enjoy the produce that comes straight from the five-acre smallholding. The small restaurant, on the north Cornish coast, is open to non-residents (bookings essential), and the menu changes according to what is in season in the garden, and what is available from other local, organic producers. Classic British dishes such as slow-cooked pork in cider, seared Cornish scallops and treacle tart with clotted cream are menu regulars. www.bangorsorganic.co.uk

Getting there: Bude is difficult to reach by public transport; it is around five hours west of London and two hours south west of Bristol/Bath by car.

2. Duke of Cambridge, Islington, London

Britain's first and only certified organic pub, this is a lovely old-fashioned pub in north London, with scrubbed wooden tables and floors, candlelight and simple, hearty cooking made with entirely organic ingredients. The menu changes twice daily, according to what ingredients are in season and at their best and the whole menu is made in the pub kitchen, from the thick-cut bread to the subtly-flavoured ice-cream. It's very popular, so booking is a good idea. <http://sloeberry.co.uk>

Getting there: Islington is in north London; the nearest Underground stations are Highbury & Islington or Angel.

3. Treehouse, Aberystwyth, mid-Wales

Halfway up Wales' spectacular coastline, the historic market town of Aberystwyth is home to one of Wales' finest organic eateries, the Treehouse, tucked away one floor above the organic shop of the same name. Whether you pop in for a full Welsh breakfast, coffee and cake or home-made soup and bread at lunchtime, all the food will be locally sourced and organic, with one 'special' each day being made entirely from local Welsh ingredients. www.treehousewales.co.uk

Getting there: Aberystwyth is less than three hours' drive north-west of Cardiff; trains from Birmingham take around three hours.

4. Whitmuir, West Linton, nr Edinburgh, Scotland

Whitmuir is more than just a restaurant, it's also a working farm with one of the best organic foodie shops in the country, with marked walking trails around the 140 acres of cultivated land. Whitmuir is the only restaurant in Scotland where all the food and drink is organic, with much of it coming directly from the farm. The menu changes daily, but always includes hearty open sandwiches, a range of veggie options and delicious homemade cakes. www.whitmuirtheorganicplace.co.uk

Getting there: West Linton is around 40 minutes drive south-west of Edinburgh; from Edinburgh bus station, buses no 100, 101, 102 & 103 go to West Linton.

5. The Swan Inn, Inkpen, Berkshire, south-east England

A classic country pub with wonderful old beams and open fires, the Swan Inn is famed for its restaurant that serves up an array of beef dishes made with meat from its own organic farm. Choose from British classics such as beef and onion pie or its award-winning sausages, or opt for one of the impressively large steaks. There are good vegetarian options too and much of the fruit and vegetables also come from the pub's organic farm. www.theswaninn-organics.co.uk

Getting there: Hungerford is around two hours drive west of London, trains from London Paddington take around one hour.

Michelin Britain 2014

There is no greater accolade in the culinary world than the Michelin Star, and once a year chefs around the country wait nervously for the publication of the *Michelin Guide* to the UK and Ireland, dubbed the Oscars of the food world. Michelin-starred dining is a very particular style; upscale, often formal and often very expensive, and tends to divide opinion. For many, eating in a Michelin-starred restaurant is the ultimate treat, while others simply don't like the style.

The 2014 *Michelin Guide* (published in October 2013) saw an additional four new starred restaurants for Britain compared to 2013, and some interesting newcomers having been granted the esteemed accolade.

Highlights include the first Peruvian restaurant to gain a star, London's Lima, a star for Story in London's Bermondsey, which had only been open five months, and a bump up for Heston Blumenthal, whose restaurant Dinner by Heston Blumenthal went from one to two stars.

Taking it from the top, there was no change in the restaurants with the utmost prize of three stars, awarded to establishments deemed as having 'Exceptional cuisine, worth a special journey' - these were Restaurant Gordon Ramsey and Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester, both in London, and The Waterside Inn and The Fat Duck both in Bray, near Windsor. Bray has long been known as a slice of foodie heaven in Britain, also home to The Hind's Head, Heston Blumenthal's Michelin-starred restaurant, and with another Michelin-starred pub The Royal Oak close by.

Perhaps the most interesting stories surround the newly crowned one star restaurants. Lima's Michelin star cements the Peruvian food trend as a firmly established part of the British food scene. It wasn't the only global cuisine on the list though - two Chinese establishments got a star - HKK in trendy Shoreditch (which launched last December) and Bo London in Mayfair.

Michelin judges clearly have an appetite for quirky restaurants, granting Story in Bermondsey - an up and coming area of London. Head Chef Tom Sellers created a menu based on childhood experiences and dishes - featuring a Three Bears' Porridge with 'one too sweet, one too salty and one just right'. Another hot chef of the moment, Jason Atherton, got a star at his Social Eating House in fashionable Soho; anyone keen to

experience more Atherton cooking should head to brand-new hotel the London Edition features the Berners Tavern, with Jason at the helm.

Two London seafood restaurants gained a star as well - Angler, in the uber-cool South Place Hotel, and Outlaw's at the Capital, the London outpost of seafood-chef Nathan Outlaw, whose Cornwall restaurant retained its two stars in the roundup as well.

Outside London, central England city Birmingham restaurant adam's gained a star, which is timely given that the city recently launched its 'Birmingham' marketing campaign to highlight the diverse and delicious food offerings you'll find there (from the Balti Triange to *Brum Yum Yum*, a new pop up street food collective; Birmingham is just over an hour by train from London). Jersey (in the Channel Islands) may be well known for its potatoes, but now not just produce but its restaurant Ormer by Shaun Rankin has been recognised with a star -Rankin has spent 18 years on Jersey promoting its gastronomy, and it's paying off (he gained his first star there in 2005 at Bohemia).

Up north in Cumbria, in the north west of England, The Samling, a luxury hotel in the Lake District, also got a star for its restaurant; the hotel also won the title of 'Best Dining Hotel in the World' at the annual Boutique Hotel Awards.

Bristol's wilks, described as 'an unpretentious neighbourhood restaurant', also got a star, and ticks the new trend towards cuisine that relies less on meat and fish to wow its guests - the restaurant lets vegetables, herbs, fruits, cereals and aromatic spices play key roles. It's more affordable than many Michelin-starred restaurants, with three courses for £19 at lunchtime, and a £26 vegetable tasting menu. Bristol, in south-west England, is one hour and 20 minutes by train from central London.

Talking of affordability, the **Bibs Gourmands** were also announced, the award that recognises those establishments offering good food at affordable prices (the limit being £28 for three courses). Another vegetable-focused establishment, the newly opened Grain Store in London's Kings Cross, got a Bib Gourmand, as did trendy Polpo in Smithfield for its Venetian bacaro inspired menu. The 26 new Bib Gourmands cover a lot of Britain, ranging from Edinburgh (Galvin Brasserie de Luxe) and Belfast (Coppi, and Home) to Lancashire (Hearth of the Ram) and Cornwall (Tolcarne Inn). Altogether there are now 132 Bib Gourmands in Britain, with the Felin Fach Griffin pub a fine Welsh example, located between the dramatic Black Mountains and lush Brecon Beacons.

Michelin Guide Great Britain and Ireland 2014 restaurant winners of two and three stars

For a list of all the restaurants with a Michelin star, including those with one star, see www.viamichelin.co.uk/web/Restaurants.

Michelin Starred Restaurants with 2 and 3 stars

Three Stars - England

Fat Duck, Bray www.thefatduck.co.uk

Waterside Inn, Bray www.waterside-inn.co.uk

Three Stars - London

Restaurant Gordon Ramsay, Chelsea www.gordonramsay.com/royalhospitalroad

Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester, Mayfair www.alainducasse-dorchester.com

Two stars England

L'Enclume, Grange-over-Sands/Cartmel www.lenclume.co.uk

Michael Wignall at The Latymer (at Pennyhill Park Hotel), Bagshot
www.pennyhillpark.co.uk/EXCLUSIVE_HOTELS/eating_and_drinking/the_latymer.aspx

Midsummer House, Cambridge www.midsummerhouse.co.uk

Gidleigh Park, Chagford www.gidleigh.com

Le Champignon Sauvage, Cheltenham www.lechampignonsauvage.co.uk

Whatley Manor (The Dining Room), Malmesbury www.whatleymanor.com/restaurants-and-bars/the-dining-room

The Hand and Flowers, Marlow www.thehandandflowers.co.uk

Restaurant Sat Bains, Nottingham www.restaurantsatbains.com

Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons, Oxford/Great Milton www.lemanoir.com

Restaurant Nathan Outlaw, Rock www.nathan-outlaw.com/nathan-outlaw-restaurant

Two Stars - London

Dinner by Heston Blumenthal www.dinnerbyheston.com

The Greenhouse, Mayfair www.greenhouserestaurant.co.uk

Sketch (The Lecture Room & Library), Mayfair www.sketch.uk.com

The Ledbury, North Kensington www.theledbury.com

Marcus Wareing at The Berkeley, Mayfair www.the-berkeley.co.uk/knightsbridge-restaurants/marcus-wareing

Le Gavroche, Mayfair www.le-gavroche.co.uk

Hélène Darroze at The Connaught, Mayfair www.the-connaught.co.uk/mayfair-restaurants-bars

Hibiscus, Mayfair www.hibiscusrestaurant.co.uk

The Square, Mayfair www.squarerestaurant.com

Two Stars - Scotland

Andrew Fairlie at Gleneagles, Auchterarder www.andrewfairlie.co.uk

Famous foodie faces

Where to eat food created by some of Britain's most famous faces, who are as much celebrities as film and music stars: Jamie, Heston, Nigella... you know who we mean, even without their surnames! Read on to find out about the next generation of chefs set to make their name on the culinary map - all in Britain.

Jamie Oliver

Jamie Oliver is known not only for his cookery skills, but his passion for changing the way people think about food, including a high-profile campaign to make school lunches more nutritious and healthy. He marries his chef talents to social enterprise at one of his most successful restaurants, Fifteen, whose flagship is in London's Old Street. Fifteen young, unemployed people were offered apprenticeships to train with 25 professional chefs and mentors, opening a restaurant serving Italian food in 2002. The results were terrific - great food and wine, a friendly vibe and a refreshing, feel-good concept to boot. There's now a Fifteen in Cornwall, and also Amsterdam. www.fifteen.net

He became known for his love of Italian cuisine, so it's no surprise that the chef decided to open Jamie's Italian. There are now 37 branches in Britain, serving seasonal and reasonably priced antipasti, pizza, pasta, risotto, mains and desserts, all inspired by Italy. www.jamieoliver.com/italian

Jamie Oliver has also opened branches of 'Barbecoa' - 'a cathedral to fire and food' - and 'Union Jacks', British flavours and wood-fired pizzas. See www.jamieoliver.com

Football fans will be pleased to hear that Jamie Oliver signed to join Manchester City - not as a player, but as caterer. His company, Fabulous Feasts, partners with Legends Hospitality, to create 'Fabulous Fan Fare', feeding the spectators to matches at Manchester's Etihad Stadium.

Heston Blumenthal

The mad scientist of the food world has made a name for himself, and for liquid nitrogen, since opening his three Michelin starred restaurant The Fat Duck. Heston Blumenthal is now a household name, whose line of products with supermarket chain Waitrose famously sells out every Christmas, as customers race to buy his limited edition puddings and even sell them for hundreds of pounds on eBay.

The Fat Duck is an extravagant choice, but a once-in-a-lifetime one, the three-and-a-half hour long tasting menu priced £195 is designed to 'bring multisensory appeal' and capture a 'delicious and exciting range of flavours'. In the same village as the Fat Duck, Bray (near to Windsor), is The Hinds Head, a pub run by Heston serving British food. It too holds a Michelin star. www.thefatduck.co.uk, www.hindsheadbray.com

As if he didn't have enough Michelin stars, the latest venture by Blumenthal, Dinner, was awarded a star in its first year and has gained a second in 2014, and shot up to number five on the World's 50 Best Restaurants list. It gives diners historically inspired British dishes, dating as far back as the 17th century, making it as much a history lesson as an exquisite dining journey. www.dinnerbyheston.com

Gordon Ramsay

Gordon Ramsay is one of the most recognised British chefs, known as much for his fiery temper as his passion for cooking. He is behind 11 restaurants in London, including Plane Food at Heathrow Airport and Restaurant Gordon Ramsay. In September 2013, he opened his 12th, the Union Street Café near London's famous Borough Market, in partnership with David Beckham. His first restaurant, Restaurant Gordon Ramsay, which he opened at only 31 years old in 1998, rapidly received three Michelin stars. To this day, it is London's longest-running restaurant to hold this award.

It isn't cheap to find out what makes Gordon such an esteemed chef, but look out for lunch deals at his restaurants, including Restaurant Gordon Ramsay, which make three-star Michelin star dining accessible to more people. www.gordonramsay.com

Nigella Lawson

Nigella is unusual in that she has never been formally trained, opened a restaurant or cooked professionally. She first came to prominence with her book *How to Cook* and became synonymous with indulgent, old-fashioned cooking that focused on cakes and baking. The daughter of Nigel Lawson, former Chancellor in Margaret Thatcher's government, her TV shows have been sold around the world, not least for her flirtatious on-screen style, which has led her to being called 'the queen of food porn'. www.scotts-restaurant.com

Marco Pierre White

The man who has done more than any other to reinvent British cuisine, MPW was the youngest ever chef to win three Michelin stars and was responsible for guiding the career of a young Gordon Ramsay. Famous for throwing guests out of his restaurant who complained, he officially 'retired' from cooking in 1999 and returned his three Michelin stars. He now owns (but no longer cooks) and oversees a clutch of restaurants, including the MPW Steakhouses including Birmingham, Chester, Liverpool, Bristol, Newcastle and Nottingham, with two branches in London. He also created Frankies, in partnership with jockey Frankie Dettori, a glammed-up Italian-American themed restaurant in Knightsbridge, London, a short walk from Harrods. <http://londonsteakhousecompany.com>

The Roux Family

This is a family whose culinary pedigree encompasses four Michelin-starred chefs - and counting. Michel Roux Jr's daughter Emily, in her twenties, is a superchef in the making.

In 1967 brothers Michel and Albert Roux opened the now legendary Le Gavroche in Mayfair, London, and made their name as two of the country's most important chefs. The restaurant gained its first Michelin star in 1974, its second in 1977 and a third in 1982; the first British establishment to gain the full compliment. The brothers' other restaurant, The Waterside Inn at Bray, has been awarded three Michelin stars for 25 consecutive years. Le Gavroche has been the launchpad for many a famous chef - Marco Pierre White, Marcus Wareing and Andrew Fairlie trained there, as well as Albert's son Michel and Michel's son Alain.

Michel Roux Jr. took over Le Gavroche in 1993, while Alain now runs the Waterside Inn. Albert, meanwhile, runs the fantastic Rocpool in Inverness in Scotland. In 2010, Michel Jr

and Albert opened a restaurant together, called Roux at the Landau, in London's Landmark Hotel. Tables are hard to get at both Le Gavroche and Roux at the Landau. Michel Roux Jr. appears regularly on TV, most notably on the programme *Masterchef*. www.le-gavroche.co.uk, <http://rocpool.com>, <http://rouxatthelandau.com>

Ones to watch - chefs making their mark in Britain

Their profile may not yet have reached the dizzying international heights of Jamie Oliver's or Gordon Ramsay's...but with their current success on Britain's restaurant scene, these rising stars of the culinary world will soon be world renowned.

Jason Atherton - Pollen Street Social, London

Classically trained - with a long apprenticeship with fellow Brit Gordon Ramsay, as well as a stint at Spain's famous El Bulli - Sheffield-born Jason started his first London restaurant in 2011 and is well established on London's restaurant scene. The Pollen Street Social was an instant success, winning a host of awards in its first year. Relaxed and inventive in equal mix, diners can watch the pastry chefs create puddings. You can find it just off Regent Street in central London and there are now three offshoots; Little Social across the road in Pollen Street, Social Eating House in Poland Street, Soho, and City Social at Tower 42 in Broad Street. Last year Jason also opened Berners Tavern, at the Edition Hotel in Berners Street, to great acclaim. www.jasonatherton.co.uk, www.pollenstreetsocial.com

Marc Wilkinson - Fraiche, Oxton, north-west England

You'll have to book several months ahead for this restaurant on the Wirral, in England's north west. It's tiny - with just 16 covers - but has foodies raving over its precise, molecular-minded cuisine. A self-acknowledged perfectionist, Wilkinson works alone in his kitchen but won a Michelin star in 2009 for his ability to pair unusual ingredients. His tasting menu is the one to opt for - six courses for £70 with a wine flight at £45. You'll find Fraiche in the village of Oxton, a quick journey by public transport or taxi from Liverpool, across the Mersey River. www.restaurantfraiche.com

Emily Watkins - Kingham Plough, Oxfordshire, south-central England

After initial training in Italy, Emily spent four years working at British avant garde Heston Blumenthal's acclaimed Fat Duck restaurant before opening her own restaurant in Oxfordshire. The restaurant - once the village pub and still full of rustic character - matches provenance with the latest cooking techniques. Families are welcome and there's also a bar area with classic pub snacks, including a famously good pork pie. You can stay here too - there are seven rooms available. The train to Kingham from London Paddington takes one hour 20 minutes.

www.thekinghamplough.co.uk



Baked custard with rhubarb at Kingham Plough, where Emily Watkins matches provenance with the latest cooking wizardry



Emily Watkins's training took her from Italy to Oxfordshire via the Fat Duck - try her famed pork pie

Aktar Islam - Lasan, Birmingham, central England

Born into a Birmingham restaurant family, Aktar opened his first restaurant at the age of 22. Voted one of the *Sunday Times*' top 100 restaurants in Britain, Lasan aims to use the finest British ingredients, including free-range, locally sourced meats, along with classic Indian spices - a lighter, healthier version of Indian food, reminiscent of dishes you'd find people cooking for themselves at home. You'll find Lasan in St Paul's Square, in the heart of the Jewellery District - reaching Birmingham by train from London takes about around 90 minutes. www.lasan.co.uk, www.aktarislam.co.uk

Michael Bremner - 64 Degrees, Brighton, south-east England

Head to bohemian Brighton on England's south coast, an hour by train from London, and you'll find a new restaurant that has had both critics and locals queuing out the door. Homegrown talent Michael Bremner has turned his focus to slow, precision cooking - his restaurant's name comes from the temperature needed to cook eggs to bring out the best flavour - it takes 40 minutes this way! He cooks in front of his customers - delivering a series of acclaimed small plates with flavours and ingredients sourced from around the world, including his signature dish; chicken wings with kimchi and blue cheese. Most dishes cost around a very reasonable £6. www.64degrees.co.uk



Welsh chef Andy Beaumont is tipped as one to watch

Andy Beaumont - Hammet House, Pembrokeshire, west Wales

Tipped as one of Britain's culinary stars of the future, Andy Beaumont has worked in a series of Michelin-starred restaurants before coming to this country house hotel in Pembrokeshire. Born into a family of farmers, locally-sourced food is hugely important to him - expect Welsh mountain lamb and wild rabbit and classic Welsh dishes given a gourmet twist, such as cawl - a soup with lamb and leeks. Located in west Wales, between Cardigan and Camarthen, reaching the hotel takes around four hours by car from London. www.hammethouse.co.uk

Ben Radford - Timberyard, Edinburgh, Scotland

From a family of restaurateurs, Ben Radford opened Timberyard in 2012 to near-universal acclaim. Housed in a converted warehouse near Edinburgh Castle, the food is big on foraging - some from the restaurant's own herb garden - but also from across Scotland, including wild garlic and chickweed, partnered with hay-roasted lamb and local seafood. Drinks include homemade tinctures and beer from nearby microbreweries. There's an in-house butchery, the restaurant has its own smokehouse, a private dining area plus an outside bar with tartan rugs to keep you cosy even when the temperature dips! www.timberyard.co.uk

Neil Rankin - Smokehouse, London

This young chef is at the forefront of London's casual, meat-minded food scene in London. After training with celebrity chef Jamie Oliver and working at the acclaimed, barbeque-minded Pitt Cue Co in Soho, he headed to the neighbourhood of Islington. Here, in a converted pub, using sustainably forested English oak, you'll find peppered ox cheek, brisket and smoked duck on the menu. The setting's great too - there's plenty of outdoor space, including a garden festooned with fairy lights. www.smokehouseislington.co.uk

Will Brown and Eddie Atwell - The Old Schoolhouse Inn, Belfast, Northern Ireland

Will, just 27, has been the protégé of plenty of Michelin-starred chefs. He started his training with Marco Pierre White at the Mirabelle in London and then in Belfast with the acclaimed chef Paul Rankin at Roscoff before working for Gordon Ramsay at Maze. He's now heading up the restaurant of the hotel started by his parents along with Eddie Atwell, who trained with Simon Rogan at L'Enclume in the Lake District. Local Ulster produce feeds into their dishes such as wild garlic soup, salt cod beignet and mussels cooked in Armagh Cider with pearl barley. The restaurant is a half hour drive from Belfast. www.theoldschoolhouseinn.com

Lee Westcott - The Typing Room, London

With Michelin-starred chef Nuno Mendes now in residence at the new Chiltern Firehouse in Marylebone, one of Britain's most exciting young chefs has taken over his original restaurant space at the Town Hall Hotel in the East End of London. Westcott, just 27, has trained under Jason Atherton, as well as completing stints at top restaurants Noma in Copenhagen and Per Se in New York. His food is fresh and inventive with dishes such as pigeon smoked with pine and celeriac with lovage and hazelnut. www.typingroom.com



Lee Westcott trained under Jason Atherton and took over Nuno Mendes's former restaurant

10 quirky cocktail bars

Prepare for a journey into the unknown, to explore unique tastes and intriguing combinations. The cocktail has undergone a revolution in recent years. Rather than bartenders, you are served by "mixologists", while tiny parasols and colourful straws have been replaced by laboratory techniques and fresh ingredients.

Inspired by the speakeasies of America's prohibition era and the artisan techniques bringing added zest to food, cocktail bars can be quirky, eccentric and, above all, fun. Here are just some of the places you can expect the unexpected, sampling unusual recipes from flavour-enhancing wizards.

Bring Your Own Cocktail (BYOC), London and Brighton

A cocktail bar that doesn't serve alcohol? It's true: at BYOC you supply your own wine or spirits to which the venue's skilled bartenders add their own selection of ingredients to make bespoke concoctions. Adding extra mystery, BYOC London is hidden behind a secret door in the basement of the innocent-looking Juice Bar in Covent Garden, central London, while BYOC Brighton is in the centre of the city in the romantically named 'Meeting House Lane'. www.byoc.co.uk

Getting there: The nearest Underground station to BYOC London is Covent Garden; Brighton is an hour by train from London Victoria.



Take your own bottle of spirits and see what the mixologists make you at BYOC London and Brighton

Worship Street Whistling Shop, London

This atmospheric 19th century-inspired underground bar in trendy Shoreditch, east London, uses perfumery skills, video walls, sound, lighting and costumes to enhance your visit. Its drinks menu draws inspiration from historical trends, so you might want to try a Victorian Secret (Diplimatico Blanco, heat-treated Fernet Branca and Cocci De Torino vermouth) with many ingredients made on the premises. www.whistlingshop.com

Getting there: The nearest stations are Old Street Underground and Shoreditch High Street Overground.

Talented Mr Fox, London

One of the undoubted stars of the new cocktail movement is Matt Whiley, a key figure behind the Whistling Shop mentioned above and another trend-setting London bar, the speakeasy-style Purl. Now he has brought his freewheeling imagination to Soho's One Leicester Street hotel. Whiley is working at the experimental end of mixology, serving anything from a Bloody Mary with pig's blood to cornflake flavouring in the White Ape. Though classic combos come radically reinvented, the comfortable seats should put you at ease.

http://oneleicesterstreet.com/tmf_bar

Getting there: The nearest Underground station is Leicester Square.



Perch at the bar at The Talented Mr Fox in London and watch your experimental cocktail come to life

Bohemia, Brighton, south-east England

Hidden in the maze of the south coast resort's Lanes back streets, Bohemia is worth exploring for its network of linked rooms and rooftop terrace. The bar also specialises in molecular cocktail-making, applying Heston Blumenthal-style technology and techniques to drinks instead of cuisine. There is also a dash of wit, as some inventions come decorated with that classic sweet seaside souvenir, Brighton rock. www.bohemiabrighton.co.uk

Getting there: Brighton is around an hour's train journey from London.

Hyde & Co, Bristol, west England

Period detail is everything at Bristol's best-kept secret - a recreation of a 1920s US speakeasy. It is decorated in vintage style, down to the piano in the corner. Such attention carries through to its drinks, recreating many of the bitters, tinctures and home-made syrups popularised during cocktail's golden age to make illegal hooch palatable.

<http://hydeandcobristol.net>

Getting there: Bristol is just less than two hours from London by train.



As much a laboratory as bar, The Alchemist is where to get your drinks mixed in Manchester

The Alchemist, Manchester, north-west England

A city familiar with glamour has adopted the cutting-edge cocktail with gusto - and this venue in the buzzing Spinningfields quarter is arguably its finest purveyor. As its name suggests, The Alchemist is as much laboratory as bar, with staff applying molecular techniques to crafting extraordinary tastes with dramatic flair. There are also

two sister branches - one near Canal Street in Manchester and one across the Pennines in Leeds, west Yorkshire. <http://thealchemist.uk.com>

Getting there: Manchester is just over two hours from London by train.

Bramble Bar, Edinburgh, Scotland

"A cocktail should stimulate the mind as well as the appetite" is the motto of this low-key, chilled establishment in Edinburgh's elegant New Town. Its drinks menu ranges from forgotten classics to its own creations, with a tasteful range of whiskey cocktails to befit one of the best bars in Scotland. <http://bramblebar.co.uk>

Getting there: Edinburgh is around four and a half hours from London by train, or fly into its international airport: just over an hour's flight from London.

Ffresh Bar, Cardiff, south Wales

This upscale theatre bar within the Welsh capital's Millennium Centre concocts themed cocktails for some of its shows - especially fabulous when the celebrated venue hosted camp musical *Priscilla Queen of the Desert*. Think sparkly sticks and cactus garnishes! Seriously, Ffresh's team fly the flag for Welsh spirits and seasonal fruit liqueurs.

www.wmc.org.uk/eatanddrink/ffresh/ffresh-bar

Getting there: Cardiff is just over two hours from London by train.

Merchant Hotel, Belfast, Northern Ireland

A jewel of Belfast's renaissance, The Bar at the luxurious Merchant Hotel is the epitome of indulgence. The antique chandeliers and fireplace give the former Ulster Bank headquarters the feel of a gentlemen's club. Its encyclopaedic menu is just as classic, and gives you the facts and trivia behind the drinks you are imbibing; plus it includes a jaw-dropping £750 mai tai. <http://themerchanthotel.com/index.php/the-bar-at-the-merchant-hotel.html>

Getting there: Belfast is just over an hour's flight from London and less than an hour's flight from Edinburgh.



Bramble bar in Edinburgh is where the cocktail stimulates mind as well as tastebuds...

15 cool cocktail bars

Cocktails have long been popular in Britain, dating back to the 1920s when the American trend for a pre-dinner drink became common practice in Europe. With prohibition restricting drinking in the States, Europe went cocktail crazy, and traditional drinks such as sherry and soda were replaced with martinis and bellinis. In the latter part of the 20th century, cocktails became unfashionable, but in later years they have become hugely popular again, with speakeasy-style bars and glamorous drinking dens opening up around the country.

LONDON

1. Skylon, South Bank

Grab a table by the vast, floor-to-ceiling windows and you've got one of the best riverside views in the whole of the capital. A vast space on the third floor of the Royal Festival Hall on the South Bank, Skylon's cocktail bar is a great spot to bring someone special to show off London to them. The bar's mixologists like to invent unusual Skylon originals but if you're after a classic you won't be disappointed either. Settle in with a martini and watch the sun set over the Thames, with iconic Waterloo Bridge in the distance. www.skylon-restaurant.co.uk



Breathtaking views from Skylon's cocktail bar.

Getting there: The nearest underground station is Waterloo.

2. Rules, Covent Garden

One of London's most famous restaurants, dating back to 1798, the little-known cocktail bar lies through a side door, above the restaurant. It was once a private room where Edward VII used to entertain his mistress, Lillie Langtry, but it's now a classic cocktail bar; stiff-backed red leather chairs, dark wood panelling and gilt-edged mirrors. Cocktails are serious and strong, no umbrellas or vivid blue concoctions, just classic drinks, brilliantly made. www.rules.co.uk

Getting there: The nearest underground station is Covent Garden

3. Evans & Peel Detective Agency, Earls Court

The latest addition to London's 'speakeasy' trend, Evans and Peel is squirreled away in a basement that's easy to miss. There's a bit of theatrics when you first enter; why you've booked an appointment/why you need a detective, but once inside the dimly-lit bar it's all about the fabulous cocktails. If you're looking for cosy, don't go - exposed brick walls and cracked floor tiles give things a distinctly urban feel - but if you're keen to be bang on trend, it's one to visit. www.evansandpeel.com

Getting there: The nearest underground station is Earls Court.

4. Callooh Callay, Shoreditch

In recent years Shoreditch, on the borders of the financial district in east London, has become the hippest place for a night out, and Callooh Callay is the coolest bar in the area. Tucked away on a cobbled side street, the décor is eclectic - Victorian portraits share space with old cassette tapes and a wall of mirrors, but the real joy is the small, secret bar that is accessed through a wardrobe. The cocktail list is vast, changes regularly and uses fresh herbs, unusual spirits and home-made syrups and cordials.

www.calloohcallaybar.com

Getting there: The nearest underground station is Old Street.

5. London Cocktail Club

Currently the bars (there are two) of choice for those who like their cocktails a little different; the drinks menu includes food-themed cocktails including a Cheese and Pineapple Martini, the Oyster Bomb and the Squid Ink Sour; drink here and you're trying to the very best London's cocktail scene has to offer.

www.londoncocktailclub.co.uk



Fancy a Cheese and Pineapple Martini? The London Cocktail Club serves an eclectic drinks' selection

Getting there: The nearest underground stations are Goodge Street and Piccadilly Circus.

OUTSIDE LONDON

6. Booly Mardy's, Glasgow, Scotland

The wonderfully-named Booly Mardy's (an anagram of Bloody Marys), is a stalwart of the Glasgow cocktail scene, serving up equally inventively-named drinks, such as the Cuban Heel (port, Havana Club, molasses and balsamic reduction, and French absinthe) and the Three off the Tea (Auchentoshan 3 wood, apricot liqueur, Rooibos tea, lemon, ginger ale). Decor is stripped back and simple, neat wooden furniture under whitewashed arches; the best pitch is at the bar, where you can watch the bartenders work their magic.

www.boolymardys.com

Getting there: Booly Mardys is a short walk from Hillhead Underground station

7. Bramble Bar & Lounge, Edinburgh, Scotland

Come for the cocktails, rather than the décor at Bramble Bar, a stark, dimly lit basement bar with bare stone walls and lots of nooks and crannies for alcohol-fuelled trysts. The bartenders will happily mix you a classic Cosmopolitan or an Old Fashioned, but the best policy is to simply tell them which spirits and flavours you like and let them mix you something of their choice. www.bramblebar.co.uk

Getting there: Bramble Bar is located in Edinburgh's Georgian New Town, on Queen Street.

8. 411, Cardiff, Wales

'What's the 411' is American slang for 'what's happening?' and, in Cardiff at least, what's happened is 411. Part louche cocktail bar, part nightclub, there are different areas for lounging, from studded leather banquettes to neon-lit corners. Cocktails range from flaming Zambucas to tequila-infused margaritas. If you want to experience Cardiff's legendary nightlife it's a great choice, for a quiet cocktail possibly not.

www.411cardiff.co.uk

Getting there: 411 is a short walk from Cardiff's Queen Street station on St Mary Street.

9. Corridor - Manchester, north-west England

Another bar modelled on the speakeasy-keep-it-under-your-hat model, a small blue neon light is the only sign Corridor exists, but once inside the dimly lit space, dotted with red spotlights, it is a pleasing escape from Manchester's industrial-sized bars and clubs. DJ's keep the atmosphere chilled with an eclectic soundtrack that embraces everything from obscure pop to soul, and the molecular cocktails are legendary. www.corridorbar.co.uk

Getting there: Corridor is a short walk from Salford station, which is 15 minutes from Manchester Piccadilly station.

10. Thirst, Oxford, south-central England

In among the 'dreaming spires' and historic colleges of Britain's most famous university town lies Thirst, a late-night cocktail bar of the sort you might usually expect to find in the heart of London. It's a big, three-floor set up, but there are plenty of small areas where you can settle in with a Bellini, or head outside to the fairy-lit terrace, perfect on a warm summer's night. www.thirstbar.com

Getting there: Oxford is just over an hour's drive west of London, or an hour on the train from London Paddington.

11. The Merchant Hotel, Belfast, Northern Ireland

The award-winning bar at the Merchant Hotel oozes class, with antique chandeliers, an open fireplace and wonderful red leather bar stools lined up at the bar. Winner of the World's Best Hotel Bar, at the global Tales of the Cocktail Festival, the drinks are as classy as the environment; martinis with a twist, expertly-made Cosmopolitans and inventive new combinations, laced with fresh fruit and herbs.

www.themerchanthotel.com

Getting there: The Merchant Hotel is in the buzzing Cathedral Quarter district, near St Anne's Cathedral on Skipper Street.



Inventive new cocktail combinations and elegant surroundings are found at Belfast's Merchant Hotel

12. Hyde & Co, Bristol, west England

Another low-profile bar, keep your eyes peeled for the bowler hat sign that points the way to this wonderfully old-fashioned-feeling gin joint. Behind the bar, waistcoated bartenders whip up Fizzes, Highballs, Sours and Juleps from a menu that's dotted with cocktail facts and little-known anecdotes. Cosy, candlelit and completely charming, it's also very popular - booking ahead is a sensible idea. www.hydeandcobristol.net

Getting there: Bristol is under three hours' drive west of London, while trains from London Paddington take just under two hours.

13. Missoni, Edinburgh, Scotland

One of the hippest spots in the Scottish capital, the bar at the Missoni Hotel oozes style, from the scarlet-topped bar to the vivid blue walls and wonderful light-bulb table lamps. Cocktails are classic rather than quirky, and can be ordered by the jug to really get your night going with a swing. For non-drinkers there's some of the best Italian coffee in the city, chilled prosecco on tap and a menu of contemporary Italian bar food. www.hotelmissoni.com



Classic cocktails at Missoni, one of Edinburgh's trendiest bars. Credit Hotel Missoni Edinburgh

Getting there: The hotel is located on the corner of the historic Royal Mile and George IV Bridge, a short walk from Edinburgh's main train station.

14. Merkaba, Brighton, south-east England

Brighton has long been a party town, but if you want to escape the more raucous bars on the seafront, head to this sleek, blinged-up bar in the Myhotel. The gold bar is ten metres long, with image banks behind showing everything from abstract graphics to classic films. Perch at the bar to watch the bartenders cooking up mojitos and martinis at whirlwind speed, and nibble on nicely prepared antipasti. www.myhotels.com

Getting there: Brighton is around an hour's drive south of London, or one hour on the train from London Victoria or London Bridge.

15. The Maven, Leeds, north England

Don't look for a sign for the Maven as there isn't one, this pre-prohibition era bar keeps a low profile, but serves some of the best Cosmopolitans in town. It has a pleasingly grown-up feel with pared-down decor; grey walls, stripped wood floors and tables and a constantly changing cocktail menu, with focuses on using fresh fruit and herbs in the powerful concoctions. www.themavenbar.com

Alcohol-free bars - delicious, healthy and hangover-free!

A combination of factors in recent years has led to the emergence of 'dry bars' in many parts of Britain. 'Dry' here refers to an absence of alcohol: in its place are delicious and healthy 'mocktails', served in a lively bar-setting. So that means socialising and enjoying a good night out, without being impaired with a hangover for the next day's vacationing! Read about the dry bars in Britain drawing in the crowds.

One of the bars that has made waves lately is **Redemption**, a dry bar that has proved popular with Londoners, with all types of drinking preferences, who fancy catching up with friends or unwinding after a busy day over cocktails that happen to be free of alcohol. Their motto is "spoil yourself without spoiling yourself", and the alcohol-free 'gastrobar' serves twists on the common cocktail, like the 'coco-rita', 'coco-tini' and delicious rum-free mojitos. They have fantastic music nights and a buzzing and friendly vibe. Find Redemption on Golbourne Road, in west London. Two more branches are being planned. www.redemptionbar.com



A beautiful beetotini at Redemption, the dry bar that invites you to 'spoil yourself without spoiling yourself' www.redemptionbar.com

In the north-west England city of Liverpool **The Brink** is a revolutionary bar that took alcohol out of the equation when setting up their 'welcoming, creative and intelligent space'. Cocktails are delicious, inspired by global favours and cost £2.95. It's popular as a place to hang out with friends for leisurely catch-ups or head to before a night out or going to the cinema - or else settle in for an evening's entertainment, as there are regular music, art and performances to soak up. The Brink is a social enterprise, and all profits go into the community to support those who have suffered from alcohol addiction. Plus it's got the royal stamp of approval; the Duchess of Cambridge made a visit here in 2012. <http://thebrinkliverpool.com>

For a night out that doesn't feature alcohol, **Sobar** in the city of Nottingham, central England, is a 'creative vibrant space by day and an alternative bar venue by night'. Like The Brink, Sobar is an off-shoot of a charity that helps people in recovery from alcohol and drugs, and many of those employed have been scarred by addiction in the past. The atmosphere is warm, welcoming and tranquil, in stark contrast to many of the rowdier establishments nearby, but hosts poetry, live music and DJ events that draw a variety of people, many young people who want to have fun without the sometimes unsociable effects of alcohol. www.sobar-nottingham.co.uk

Both **Brighton** in south-east England and **Newcastle** in the north east are buzzing cities well known for their vibrant nightlife, and both will be opening their own dry bars in the city centre soon.

5 great mocktails to order in the capital

Andina is a trendy Peruvian restaurant in east London that whips up fantastic and zingy mocktails, with its own juice bar making it a healthy choice for fashionable eaters. <http://andinalondon.com>

Hakkasan has a Michelin star and mocktails worthy of the accolade. Try the strawberry and basil martini for something refreshing, or the Bitter Fortune for a more fragrant option. <http://hakkasan.com>

The Arch in London has prime position under Marble Arch. A chic contemporary boutique hotel, it's launched a 'Virgin Vera', a non-alcoholic cocktail that harnesses the power of Aloe Vera to make you feel fantastic. www.thearchlondon.com

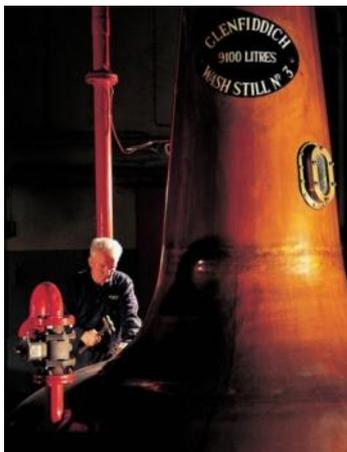
TIP! The British are known for their love of Indian and Pakistani cuisine, and cities like Birmingham, Cardiff, Manchester, Glasgow and London have a strong representation of South Asian flavours on their dining out scenes - head to Asha's in Birmingham for some of the best lassi you'll find this side of the subcontinent (the pistachio and rose flavour is divine www.ashasrestaurants.com/birmingham) or Moksh in Cardiff (where you can even get a mango lassi in lollipop form!) www.moksh.co.uk

Whisky, Scotland's national drink

No visit to Scotland is complete without a visit to a whisky distillery, a drink that is as integral to Scottish life as Guinness is to the Irish. According to the Scotch Whisky Association, it was the Scottish tippie of choice as long ago as 1494, when it was recorded in the tax records of the time, the Exchequer Rolls. These days, all visitors to Scotland can learn about Scotland's most famous drink, with distillery tours and tastings dotted around the country; May 2014 even saw a whole month of events and festivals dedicated to whisky, as part of the Homecoming Scotland programme.

There are five main whisky-producing regions in Scotland, each with their own characteristics.

Highlands



Take a tour of the distillery of one of the world's best-selling whiskies - Glenfiddich

In the north of Scotland, the region of Speyside is home to half the country's distilleries and produces the two best-selling malt whiskies in the world, the Glenlivet and Glenfiddich. Follow the world's only Whisky Trail that links seven distilleries, including Strathisla, the oldest in the Highlands. All the distilleries offer tours and tastings. www.maltwhiskytrail.com

Getting there: Speyside is around one hour from Inverness airport, which is served by several airlines from London.

Islands

The west coast of Scotland is dotted with islands that all have their own whisky distilleries, and the Isle of Mull - an easy ferry ride from the port of Oban - has one of the best, the Tobermory Distillery. Established in 1798, this is a chance to see whisky produced in the old-fashioned way, and offers a very different experience to some of the big, modern distilleries on the mainland. www.tobermorymalt.com

Getting there: Ferries run regularly from the port of Oban, (www.calmac.co.uk) which is around 50 miles north-west of Glasgow.

Islay

The southernmost of the Inner Hebrides, Islay has eight malt whisky distilleries, most of them close to the island's spectacular shoreline. Whisky from Islay has a distinctive, strong flavour due to the fact the island is composed almost entirely of peat. The distilleries in the north, such as Bruichladdich, tend to produce softer-tasting whiskies, ideal for those new to the drink. www.bruichladdich.com

Getting there: Twice-daily flights from Glasgow Airport with Logan Air (www.loganair.co.uk).

Lowlands

Whisky produced in the four distilleries in the Lowlands - the southern and eastern half of the country - has a much lighter taste, leading to them being known as the 'Lowlands Ladies'. Pay a visit to the Scottish Whisky Experience in Edinburgh, located right next door to the spectacular castle. Tour guides take visitors through the different whisky-producing regions and offer a tutored tasting, with a dram (small amount) from the world's largest collection of Scotch whiskies. www.whisky-heritage.co.uk

Getting there: There are regular flights to Edinburgh from London, as well as flights from Belfast, Birmingham, Cardiff, Manchester and Southampton.

Campbeltown

In the 19th century, Campbeltown - tucked away on the southern tip of the Kintyre Peninsula - was the whisky capital of the world, with 37 distilleries. Only three remain, each with a unique history. Springbank is the oldest distillery in Scotland that is still family-owned, with the whisky produced by hand, using traditional methods. Tours and tastings are available, and the distillery produces three different single malts to try. www.springbankwhisky.com

Getting there: Campbeltown is around 3.5 hours' drive from Glasgow, or there are twice-daily flights from Glasgow with Loganair (www.loganair.co.uk).

Whisky plus...

With those five distinctive whisky producing regions in Scotland, any trip to the destination will present a distillery tour wherever you travel.

Building on the huge popularity of its national drink, Scotland's distilleries are now offering unique supplements to whisky tastings, to boost further interest in the drink.

Good for...foodies



It's now increasingly popular to twin whisky with certain foods. Dalwhinnie Distillery, located within the Cairngorms National Park in the Scottish Highlands (around a two-hour drive from Glasgow and Edinburgh), carefully pairs its classic single malts with specially chosen luxury chocolates handmade in the Highlands (www.discovering-distilleries.com/dalwhinnie).

Discover the tempting combination of whisky and chocolate at the Dalwhinnie Distillery

Pairing whisky with food is not the preserve of distilleries. Edinburgh restaurant The Whiski Rooms offers a whisky and cheese tasting, while if you head to fellow Edinburgh eaterie The Amber Restaurant you can feast on Scottish tapas - smoked salmon and oatcakes, smoked venison and wood pigeon pâté - paired with Scottish whiskies (www.whiskyrooms.co.uk, www.amber-restaurant.co.uk/amber_food_and_drink.php).

Good for...unique experiences

You can sample whisky straight from the 'teapot' at Glengoyne Distillery - just 14 miles from Glasgow - on its Teapot Tipple tour. Visitors enjoy a tutored tasting in its Club Room, which begins with The Teapot Dram, recreated in memory of when workers at the distillery helped themselves to three large drams from the canteen teapot every day, before ending with the chance to bottle whisky straight from two special single casks (www.glengoyne.com).

Have you ever wanted to make your own whisky? To commemorate its 90th birthday in 2014, the renowned luxury Gleneagles hotel, located in Perthshire, central Scotland, is offering guests the chance to have a go at creating their own elixir to drink in the Gleneagles bar and then take home. The 'Perfect Pour' experience teaches guests how to identify, savour and blend the various flavours of whisky using a selection of carefully chosen single malts (www.gleneagles.com).

One of Scotland's oldest distilleries (established in 1775), the Famous Grouse Experience at The Glenturret Distillery in Crieff, central Scotland, has opened a new Tasting Bar, (as part of a recent major refurbishment to its visitor experience), alongside which there are a series of nosing pods to allow visitors to get much closer to the whisky blending process and identify the spirit's aromas and ingredients. Another of its new features is the Personalisation Bar, which allows customers to not only bottle their own whisky, but to personalise their bottle of The Famous Grouse blended whisky on site (www.thefamousgrouse.com).



Personalise your own blended whisky at The Famous Grouse

And what's a whisky tour without a ride in a whisky barrel! At the Scotch Whisky Experience tour in Edinburgh, visitors embark on a bubbling barrel ride through a replica distillery, designed to immerse you in the whisky-making process. The attraction has recently undergone a substantial renovation, and visitors can now also experience a new exhibition recapping the production process, plus use hi-tech touch screens with information in 20 languages (www.scotchwhiskyexperience.co.uk).

Good for...whisky connoisseurs



You should find at least one whisky you like out of the 400 on offer at SCOTCH at The Balmoral

Rocco Forte's The Balmoral launched SCOTCH in late 2013 - a new signature whisky bar featuring the largest collection of purely Scottish whiskies available to the general public in Edinburgh. Guests can sample an impressive collection of 400 whiskies from Scotland's traditional whisky regions in a variety of blends, malts and vintages dating back to 1940. SCOTCH's collection of exclusively Scottish whisky is overseen by three highly

trained Whisky Ambassadors who are on hand to offer guests advice when selecting a dram. (www.roccofortehotels.com/hotels-and-resorts/the-balmoral-hotel/restaurants-and-bars/scotch).

One luxurious way to enhance your knowledge and interest in the 'water of life' is to embark on a Classic Whisky Journey on board the luxurious Belmond Royal Scotsman train. Guests receive an insight into the world of Scotch, plus tastings, and travel through the heart of the Speyside whisky region (www.royalscotsman.com/web/rs/search_results.jsp).

More information at www.visitscotland.com/about/food-drink/whisky

It's not just Scotland that produces whisky!

In South Wales, the splendid Penderyn Distillery produces award-winning single malts, with tours and tastings available to visitors. In April 2014 the distillery released a new Single Malt in its series of 'Icons of Wales', created to celebrate the centenary of the birth of Dylan Thomas, the renowned Welsh writer and poet (www.welsh-whisky.co.uk).

The distillery is also in the process of expanding, aiming to transform distillery production and enhance its visitor experience; it's set for completion in June 2014.

In Northern Ireland, Bushmills is the oldest whisky distillery, with tours of the mixing rooms and distillery, located right by the spectacular County Antrim coast and World Heritage site, the Giant's Causeway (www.bushmills.com).

Say cheers to English and Welsh wine!

Would you be surprised to learn that wine production has been part of English and Welsh history for nearly 2,000 years? Vines have been growing here ever since the Romans introduced them to the countryside and, by the time of the Domesday Book - the great survey of the country taken in 1086 - there were around 40 vineyards still operating. And over recent decades many vineyards have opened up for business, particularly in the south-east of England, where the chalky soils are similar to that of France's Champagne region.

English and Welsh wines regularly make the wine lists at restaurants such as Roast in London's Borough Market

(and wine produced at Chapel Down vineyards in Kent, south-east England, was reportedly served at the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge's wedding!) and they've caught the eye of



English and Welsh vineyards are yielding plenty of excellent grapes that are being turned into award winning wines

luxury stockists, such as Fortnum & Mason - here you'll find wines from the Ancre Hill vineyard in Monmouth (on the Wales/England borders) on the shelves.

This is down to the fact that, year on year, English and Welsh wines are scooping awards from international wine and spirit boards, garnering a solid reputation in the wine world. The International Wine Challenge in early May 2014 awarded four English wine producers five gold medals; two to Camel Valley in Cornwall, south-west England, and one each to Breaky Bottom, Nyetimber and Gusbourne Estate, all in south-east England.

Wine experiences

Why not get right into the heart and spirit of our wines by visiting one of the 400-plus vineyards dotted around England and Wales, and stay overnight in onsite accommodation so you can enjoy the full flavours of the grape and leave the driving for another day.

While many vineyards are based in the south and east of England (the soil and climate make ideal vine-growing conditions), you'll find **England's most northerly vineyard** up in the beautiful county of Yorkshire. The Ryedale Vineyard is located just a half-hour drive from the ancient city of York and offers bed and breakfast accommodation in its Grade II-listed farmhouse, which dates back to around 1630. The vineyard regularly holds events that **pair its wines with Yorkshire cheeses** so guests can get a real taste of the fantastic produce available locally (<http://ryedalevineyards.co.uk>).

Vineyards also offer the **self-catering option**. Enjoy the tours and tastings at the Camel Valley Vineyard in Cornwall, south-west England (around a 90-minute drive from the international airport of Exeter, Devon) while staying at one of the vineyard's two stone-built barn conversion holiday cottages, one of which overlooks the vines. And, if you fancy a spot of **fishing** on a break from drinking the award-winning wines, the vineyard has its own private stretch of the Camel River where you can try your hand at catching salmon and sea trout (www.camelvalley.com).

If hotel service is more to your taste, try the **boutique hotel** located within the grounds of the Purbeck Vineyard, nestled in the small village of Harmans Cross in Dorset on the south coast of England (around a 90-minute drive from the international airport in Southampton). As well as taking part in its grape-to-glass tours, make the visit extra special with a trip on the **Swanage steam railway**. Steaming along the bottom of the valley close to the vineyard, the train calls at the village station - the whole journey offers up picturesque views and is a great add on to a trip (www.vineyard.uk.com).

For a real **gourmet treat**, why not intersperse brushing up on your wine-tasting skills with your cooking skills! Llanerch Vineyard in south Wales, 20 minutes' drive from the capital Cardiff, is also home to the **Angela Gray Cookery School**, where courses as diverse as Indian cuisine, seasonal vegetables or bread baking are available. Dine on your creations and then try out some of the 22 award-winning Ciriad wines at the vineyard. And there's no need to leave straight after; stay over in one of its farmhouse rooms, spacious studios or self-catering cottages (<http://llanerch-vineyard.co.uk>).

Let someone else do the driving when you hop on board a **vintage Routemaster bus** on the Sussex Wine Tour in south-east England, run by the Brighton Food Festival. Launching as part of the 2014 English Wine Week, and running until September 2014, guests are taken to Ridgeview Wine Estate for a vineyard and winery tour, followed by lunch and a cheese

tasting with a fun wine quiz to test your knowledge of English wines. Then it's back on board for a tour and an interesting look into still wine production at the Bolney Wine Estate (www.brightonfoodfestival.com).

Vineyard visits - a selection

Three Choirs, Gloucestershire, west England

One of England's leading single estate vineyards, Three Choirs has 75 acres of beautiful vineyards, with a nature trail and audio posts giving information as to the different types of grapes. There are daily, free group tours at 14.30 and tastings are always available. The vineyard also has an excellent restaurant and 11 comfortable rooms if you want to make a night of it. www.three-choirs-vineyards.co.uk

Getting there: Newent is close to the England/Wales border, around 90 minutes' drive from Cardiff and three hours from London.

Ridgeview, Sussex, south-east England

Producer of award-winning sparkling wines, Ridgeview's Marksman 2009 beat off entries from 50 other countries to win the Gold Medal in the International Wine Challenge in 2012. The vines were first planted on the lush South Downs in 1994, where the chalky soil has helped create world-class white and rose sparkling wines. Tastings and tours can be arranged. www.ridgeview.co.uk

Getting there: Ridgeview is around 90-minutes' drive south of London, and a short drive from Brighton. Hassocks train station is a ten-minute taxi ride, and trains take around one hour from London Victoria.

Chapeldown, Kent, south-east England

Kent has always been known as the Garden of England, and the chalky soil makes it perfect for growing plump, juicy Pinot Noir and Chardonnay grapes. Chapeldown has been producing award-winning wines for ten years and offers guided tours of the working winery, along with the chance to stroll through the 22 acres of vineyards. Tastings can also be arranged, in the elegant winery building, made by local craftsmen from materials used in the wine-making process. www.chapeldown.com

Getting there: Tenterden is around 90-minutes' drive south east of London, and around 20-minutes' drive from the Eurotunnel terminal at Ashford.

Annual wine celebration

English Wine Week runs annually at the end of May/beginning of June, enabling wine drinkers to get even more out of their passion for English wines as they are celebrated with a packed programme of events. See www.englishwineweek.co.uk for more information.

Ten ways to enjoy a British craft beer

Britain's range of artisan beers, made by small, independent brewers, is fast expanding. From pilseners and porters to pale ales and stouts - made with unusual hop varieties using innovative techniques - pubs and bars are serving up a much wider range of flavours than traditional lagers and bitters. There are plenty of ways to enjoy the craft beer experience.



Make your very own pint at the London Fields Brewery or the new Drygate in Glasgow. Image credit Andre Titcombe

DIY Craft Brewing in London and Glasgow

One for the true beer fan, these day-long courses (£95, including lunch) run on the first Saturday of every month at **London Fields Brewery** in Hackney, east London. During seven hours of hands-on instruction, master brewer Ben will guide you through the hop-to-bottle process - and tastings of the brewery's classic ales, from citrusy Hackney Hopster to berry-ish Love Not War. www.londonfieldsbrewery.co.uk

Meanwhile June 2014 sees the opening of the UK's first experimental brewery that allows the public to make their own beer and watch brewers in action located in Glasgow, Scotland. **Drygate**, previously a derelict 1960s box factory, is the home to this new project, and features an award-winning vintage bar and kitchen through a panoramic glass wall. The Drygate Studio Kit specialist beer-making equipment enables visitors to brew their own beer, and even bottle and package it to create their very own brand! Or you can sit back and sip ready-made craft beers, and feast on delicious charcuterie

<http://drygate.com>

Flagship 57, Aberdeen, north-east Scotland

Prefer a spot of painting with your pint rather than a pork pie? Make your way to Aberdeen and the original BrewDog bar. Here, on the last Thursday of every month, the city's illustrators, designers, craft-makers and musicians gather to form a creative mash-up. Visitors can wash the entertainment down with an impressive range of BrewDog's favourite draughts and guest craft beers (look out for Ghost Town porter from newbie Scottish microbrewers Cromarty Brewing Co). www.brewdog.com

Beer-battered fish and chips, Shropshire, central England

Three Tuns Brewery, established in 1642, claims to be the oldest in England; set in the picturesque small market town of Bishops' Castle, a two hour journey from Birmingham, it sticks to a small range of traditional artisan beers, from Cleric's Cure IPA to Steampunk, a dark bitter made with blackstrap molasses. Try them an alternative way at sister pub, The Three Tuns Inn, by tucking into a plate of Three Tuns beer-battered fish and chips.

www.thethreetunsinn.co.uk

Tutored Tastings, Manchester, north-west England

The Beermoth beer shop, in Manchester's creative Northern Quarter, is no ordinary ale emporium. Its exposed brick walls, designer lighting and contemporary urban style puts a fresh modern spin on the ancient art of brewing. As well as stocking one of the largest ranges of national and international craft beers in the country (British pickings include

craft beers from The Kernel, Thornbridge and Buxton breweries), knowledgeable staff can advise you on food pairing. www.beermoth.co.uk

Beer & Books, Cornwall, south-west England

A five-hour train ride from London, the historic maritime town of Falmouth is fast becoming a foodie - and beer - hotspot! HAND speciality beer bar is set, appropriately, in an old brewery yard and offers a range of over 80 craft beers and hosts mini beer festivals. Also in town is Beerwolf Books. Part-bookshop, part-pub it always has a choice of six craft ales on draught; ask for a pint of Rampant Ruby, a red-tinted ale from Coastal Brewery in nearby Redruth. www.handbeerbar.co.uk, www.beerwolfbooks.com

Liverpool Craft Beer Expo, Liverpool, north-west England

One of the hippest beer festivals in the country, Liverpool Craft Beer Expo takes place at Camp & Furnace, a creative, industrial-style event space in the Beatles' home city, Liverpool. Streetfood and music are part of the draw but it's the chance to try a line-up of 200 beers from 60 different British craft breweries that's the centre of attraction here. www.liverpoolcraftbeerexpo.com



Liverpool Craft Beer Expo is the ideal time to expand your knowledge of British bevies

Beer & Burgers, Cardiff, south Wales

Two hours' west of London by train brings you to the Welsh capital, and Wales' first specialist craft beer and cider bar. The Urban Tap House was opened last year by the people behind Tiny Rebel brewery and offers a range of regularly changing guest ales alongside a menu of gourmet burgers. Bristol Beer Factory's Milk Stout and Thornbridge Brewery's AM:PM are on the current line-up. www.urbantaphouse.co.uk

The Grove Inn, Yorkshire, north England

For a winning range of national and international craft beers in an unpretentious setting, this traditional pub in the historic Yorkshire mill town of Huddersfield, around 2.5 hours north of London by train, fits the bill. A choice of over 200 craft beers are in stock at any time - among them High Wire West Coast Pale Ale from local microbrewery Magic Rock - as well as cask and keg ales. www.groveinn.co.uk

Beer Club, Belfast, Northern Ireland

In the Northern Irish capital the Beer Club organises monthly craft beer tastings at the Hudson Bar, sometimes on a flavour theme such as sour beers, sometimes on a paired food theme, such as beer and cheese. Tastings are global in scope but there's usually a British beer or two in the mix and the Hudson itself has lager-like Yardsman from newbie local craft brewery, Hercules, on draught. www.facebook.com/belfast.beerclub.7

Craft Beer Food Pairing, London

Many British restaurants are going one step further than advising diners which beer to drink with their dinner. At The Old Brewery restaurant in London, owned by craft brewers Meantime, the company's ales are used in dishes such as stout-marinated oysters and chocolate beer sorbet. Even Gordon Ramsay is getting in on the trend at his Michelin-starred French-Asian restaurant, Maze. Sushi & Craft Beer menus here pair California rolls

and nigiri with Meantime's limited edition Imperial Pilsener, London brewed using Sorachi Ace hops from Japan. www.meantimebrewing.com, www.gordonramsay.com

Great British Craft Beer Festivals

London Craft Beer Festival

Over 100 artisan beers from across the UK and Europe, plus paired food and music all under one roof. www.londoncraftbeerfestival.co.uk

Belfast Beer and Cider Festival

Temporarily the biggest bar in Northern Ireland, with over 100 beers. Also tutored tastings and live music. www.belfastbeerfestival.co.uk

Craft100

Most British beer festivals include at least some continental or American beers in their line-up but not this one. If it's British craft beers you're after, you'll find 100 of them here. www.craft100.co.uk

Craft Beer Rising

Possibly the coolest beer festival on British shores, this one is based at the old Truman Brewery in East London and covers 200 beers plus streetfood and live music. www.craftbeerrising.co.uk

Gin in Britain - distilleries, experiences and the best bars

Gin has exploded in popularity in Britain in recent times, firmly casting aside its former image as the drink of choice for grannies, and seeing an energised revival as the fashionable tippable of choice. It's not just about ordering the house gin with a bit of tonic now - such is the appetite for gin that these days you can go on a 'Gin Journey', make your own bottle (blended with the botanicals and ingredients of your choosing) or select from the world's largest gin selection at an Oxfordshire

hotel - you describe the flavours you like, or even the mood you're in, and expert barmen will select from over 170 types of gin.

Interested? Read on for a brief history of gin, the distilleries to incorporate into your trip, gin experiences and the best-stocked bars to find out your personal favourite.

Before we dive in - a bit of history

Gin as we know it was invented in the 17th century in Holland, by a Dutch physician, Franciscus Sylvius - and like many of today's *aperitifs* and dinner accompaniments, it



Hogarth's *Gin Lane* paints a grim picture of London's drinking scene in the 1700s...

started out as a medicine. The English had time enough to notice the drink's impact during the 80 Years War, when they fought against the Spanish in Holland, and noted its calming effects before battle - which is said to be what gave us the term 'Dutch courage'.

The English took to it in a big way, mixing things up by adding turpentine to the spirit for flavour, (which is inadvisable today!). Gin was cheap and fast became linked to social problems, illustrated in William Hogarth's 1751 engraving *Gin Lane*, which you can see at the Foundling Museum in London's Bloomsbury (www.foundlingmuseum.org.uk). In the engraving, a poverty-hit area north of Covent Garden plays host to all manner of domestic disasters: a half-drunk and semi-nude woman drops her child to certain death, brawls break out, a boy shares a bone with a dog, and everyone drinks gin. Hence its nickname, 'mother's ruin'.

Gen up on gin - see how it's made at a distillery

LONDON DISTILLERIES

City of London Distillery, 24 Bride Lane, City of London

The City of London Distillery combines a working distillery, bar and visitor attraction. Gin-enthusiasts can see first-hand how the drink is made and even create a bespoke bottle at the Gin Lab (£125 per person). Alternatively, a tour of the distillery is a fascinating insight into the science behind the spirit, and includes a gin and tonic on arrival and a bottle to take home afterwards (£40 per person). Check website for times and to book. www.cityoflondondistillery.com.



City of London Gin Distillery's bar is lined with bottles of gin

Sipsmith, 83 Cranbrook Rd, West London (from summer 2014)

Sipsmith established the first new copper-based distillery in London for 200 years to great acclaim from tasters in the know. Their distinctive gin combines citrus, juniper and coriander and, since opening, visitors have been able take a tour to see how 'Prudence' - the name of their copper still - makes it. They are now changing premises, needing more space to meet demand, and Prudence's 'sister' will be showing visitors on distillery tours how it's done from summer 2014. Tours used to cost £12, prices at the new premises have yet to be established so check the website for that, and times.

www.sipsmith.com/tours

Portobello Ginstitute, 171 Portobello Rd, West London

Blend your own at the Ginstitute, which calls itself 'London's second smallest museum'. It's altogether an educational event - start with the history of gin downstairs, then head to the still room for a science lesson. Nose various

botanicals and create your own flavour, leaving with your own personal invention in a bottle, with the recipe kept on file for you to re-order when you like. The £100 class includes a cocktail reception, the distilling class, a 70cl bottle of Portobello Road No. 171 gin, a 70cl bottle of your own - and a martini 'for good measure'.

<http://portobellostarbar.co.uk/ginstitutelondon>

DISTILLERIES OUTSIDE LONDON

Plymouth Gin, south-west England

Plymouth Gin is a Protected Geographical Indication, referring to any gin distilled in Plymouth, a city with strong naval connections on England's south-west coast.

Plymouth Gin was popular in the early 20th century when, being a naval base, the city had to quench the thirst of the British Royal Navy so furnished all new vessels with a 'Plymouth Gin commissioning kit'. The drink went on to be widely consumed in British India, where it was mixed with tonic water - which had the vital anti-malarial quinine - and hence was born the gin and tonic we know and love today.

You can visit the Black Friars Distillery, working home of Plymouth Gin since 1793, and choose from a range of tours: the Gin Connoisseur's Tour takes an interesting look at the history of gin and Plymouth's heritage as a gin-producing hotspot (£20), while a Master Distiller's tour includes making your own gin recipe (£40). If you have less time, a 40-minute tour of the distillery will give a good overview of gin production and includes a gin and tonic in the bar (£7).

www.visitplymouth.co.uk

New for later this year (opening date TBC) is the **Bombay Sapphire distillery**, due



An artist's impression of the Bombay Sapphire Distillery, which will take visitors on a journey through a botanical greenhouse designed by Thomas Heatherwick

to open in Hampshire and designed by man of the moment, Thomas Heatherwick (remember the Olympic Cauldron, with the moving petals? A Heatherwick Studio design.) The multi-million pound renovation of what was, for 200 years, one of England's most significant banknote paper-making facilities is expected to draw 100,000 visitors a year. You'll be able to taste and discover more about Bombay Sapphire, which was created in 1761 to a now secret recipe. The distillery will be built on a two hectare brown-field site, near the grounds of Laverstoke Park, 60

miles south west of London. The highlight of the complex build will be the 'glass house', which will house the ten botanicals used to make the spirit. The Bombay Sapphire Distillery will offer an exciting distillery experience as well as scheduled events and cocktail masterclasses. Guests will also have the opportunity to go behind the scenes of the spirit's unique Vapour Infusion distillation process

See www.laverstokemill.co.uk for more details.

Dedicated gin experiences

Late in 2013 a company called Shake Rattle and Stir (SRS) was created, offering 'Gin Journeys' through London, which has intrigued both gin lovers and the gin curious. A journey involves meeting up with a group of fellow gin lovers, and being ferried (in a dedicated minibus) to four very different, very hip London bars to taste gins in both neat form and as parts of inventive cocktails. Such was the success of the venture that SRS is now setting up a new **London Gin Tour** that will take place in the afternoon (as opposed to the Journeys, which are evening affairs), and that will be more educative (you'll get to hear about gin's history and see the famous *Gin Lane* painting) though, of course, tastings will be included. Gin Journeys are £50 per person. See www.shakerattleandstir.co.uk for more information.



Find out all about the history of gin in London at Beefeater London: The Home of Gin, with a trademark G&T at the end

the fragrant botanicals used in the creation of gin. The tour continues with a walk through the live production process in the distillery's cathedral-like still house, and ends with a complimentary drink - the classic Beefeater gin and tonic. Tickets £12 www.beefeaterdistillery.com

Hotspots for gin lovers



The world's largest gin collection have won an award for 'Services to Gin'. Start sampling! At The Feathers in Oxfordshire

guide you to your new favourite drink, as they are talented at matching your mood to your beverage. You can also stay overnight in beautiful rooms and explore the market town of Woodstock, the 'gateway to the Cotswolds' and quintessential

Everyone who knows gin knows Beefeater, one of the biggest brands worldwide. For the first time, the distillery - based in the capital - will be opening its doors to visitors from May 2014 at **Beefeater London: The Home of Gin**. Beefeater gin is the only historic dry gin still distilled in the capital city, and the new interactive experience will take visitors on a journey through the cobbled Victorian street markets of Covent Garden, to the secret watering holes during prohibition, then they'll get up close and personal with

England, or visit the splendid Blenheim Palace nearby.

www.prideofbritainhotels.com/The_Feathers

One of the Welsh capital city Cardiff's most celebrated restaurants is **The Potted Pig**, which you'll find in an unusual location under refurbished bank vaults. It's an atmospheric place to sample one of the 30 gins on offer; gin is a good accompaniment to pork dishes which, as the name suggests, The Potted Pig excels at. The gin menu is divided into London Dry, Floral, Fruity, Aromatic and Spicy, Fresh and Crisp, Sweet and After Dinner Gin, and they offer the geographical gamut from Plymouth, to London, to Scotland, to Wales and even the Dutch 'Bols Genever', which was the origin of 'Dutch Courage'. <http://thepottedpig.com/drinks>

Glasgow's first dedicated gin bar, **Gin 71** has an impressive selection of gins, especially boasting a big range of Scottish varieties. Many of the tonics are homemade, so this will be a G&T with a difference! It's right in the centre of the city, so perfect to start your night off at www.gin71.com

When in Liverpool, north-west England, head to the historic and welcoming pub **The Belvedere**, loved by locals and also the site of Liverpool Gin's distillation. They serve it in large goblets with a slice of watermelon and juniper berries (www.belvedereliverpool.com). There's also a fantastic new bar, Jenny's, from the people behind another great Liverpool social spot, Berry & Rye. Gin lovers will be more than satisfied with the selection behind the bar, and there's even a shop downstairs to purchase unique spirits to take home.

Pleased to Meet You is a relative newcomer to renowned party city Newcastle's nightlife scene (though it's not just about nightlife - try the Sunday roast there for a post-party energy booster the next day!) There are more than 50 gins on the menu, eight tonics and more than a dozen garnishes, but don't worry - help is at hand. The menu is split into enticing sections, including 'Secret ingredient gins', 'Naval gins' and the more usual kinds, with a handy 'top four' of the bar's own favourite combinations, including the inviting Hoxton pink grapefruit and coconut gin with Fentimans tonic and a slice of pink grapefruit. <http://ptmy-newcastle.co.uk/gin>

If you need somewhere to rest your head after a night on the town drinking gin but have developed a liking for it (and want it to hand!) book in at the **South Place Hotel** in London. One of the capital's funkier hotels, in the heart of the City of London, über-trendy South Place has a bottle of Sipsmith gin in every room - and its bartenders will whip you up a lovely gin cocktail in the bar downstairs once you're ready for more. www.southplacehotel.com

Edinburgh is set to get a new gin hotspot in June (2014) with the opening of a new bar run by Spencerfield Spirit Company - makers of the delicious Edinburgh Gin, who have plans to open a bar with an on-site distillery in the centre of the Scottish capital. The bar, which is yet to be named, will have a mini pot still and customers

will be able to make their own bottle of gin there and then to take home! Further details yet to be announced.

In its day the beautiful and historic **Crown Liquor Saloon** in Belfast, Northern Ireland, was one of the largest Victorian gin palaces in the world, and is definitely worth a visit for its gorgeous and well preserved interior and buzzing atmosphere. For gin, today you're best off heading to **Muriel's**, a charmingly eccentric bar that loves its gin and has an enormous range to sample. Located in the city's buzzing Cathedral Quarter, it's among many bars vying for competition, but for gin lovers, it's the only place to go. www.facebook.com/muriels.cafebar

Did you know? World Gin Day is celebrated on 14 June - the perfect time to explore Britain's gin hotspots!

Micro-distilled Marvels

There are a number of artisan, micro-distilled spirits you can sample on your visit to Great Britain; a recent resurgence in boutique, small-batch distilling has seen a boom in new flavours and innovative ingredients, embracing the tastes of the British landscape.

Scotland

Gin is experiencing a stylish renaissance and in the Scottish capital of Edinburgh, the trend is really taking off. Sample delicious elderflower or raspberry Edinburgh Gin, distilled with Scottish botanicals including heather and milk thistle and infused with local berries, in Edinburgh Gin's own bar at their second distillery in central Edinburgh

(www.spencerfieldspirit.com/products/edinburgh-gin/original/).



Edinburgh gin now comes infused with local berries

For a taste of the Highlands, Caorunn gin mixes traditional Celtic botanicals - including rowan berry, dandelion leaf, bog myrtle and heather

(www.caorunngin.com). Try it at One Square in Edinburgh: Caorunn is star of their signature cocktail, and with gin tastings and more than 50 varieties behind the bar, it's a gin education (www.onesquareedinburgh.co.uk).



Highland marvel - Caorunn gin

Botanist Gin hails from the island of Islay, a forty-minute flight from Glasgow. Incorporating 22 wild herbs and flowers foraged by local experts, the spirit is slowly distilled in the world's only active Lomond pot-still - usually used for whisky (www.bruichladdich.com/the-botanist-islay-dry-gin).

Relax with a G&T at nearby Katie's Bar, known for its seasonal produce (www.bridgend-hotel.com/katies-bar/).

Hardy flowers, hand-picked from the cliff tops of Shetland - a 90-minute flight from Edinburgh - make each annual batch of Blackwood's vodka and gin unique, depending on the oceanic climate (www.blackwoodsgin.co.uk). Try at the waterfront family-run Scalloway Hotel bar, a short drive from Shetland airport (www.scallowayhotel.com/bar.htm).

Micro-distilled whiskies are rare, due to legal limits on minimum still size and the time it takes to mature. Abhainn Dearg distillery in the Outer Hebrides (an hour's flight from Glasgow) is one of the newest - and furthest west - in Scotland. Their single malt the Spirit of Lewis is based on an ancient recipe, distilled with the island's mineral-rich mountain water (www.abhainndearg.co.uk). Enjoy at Glasgow's favourite Highland haunt, artisan whisky specialists MacSorley's (www.macsorleys.com).

England

Made in the heart of East London - once known for its notorious Victorian gin palaces - Hoxton Gin offers a contemporary spin on the traditional tippie, with a distinctive medley of tropical flavours, including grapefruit and coconut (www.hoxtongin.com). Enjoy at hip East London favourite The Hoxton Pony (www.thehoxtonpony.com).

North London micro-distillery Sacred Gin is known for its exotic botanicals such as frankincense, and spicy flavours including cardamom gin (www.sacredspiritscompany.com). Sip a martini at Dukes in Mayfair, central London - favourite watering hole of Bond author Ian Fleming (www.dukeshotel.com).

Chilgrove Gin eschews fashionable botanicals and is made with grapes rather than traditional grain, resulting in a refined finish (www.chilgrovegin.com). Named after the Sussex hamlet a two-hour drive from London, near Goodwood racing course, try at local The White Horse Pub and Inn for a taste of the English countryside (www.thewhitehorse.co.uk).



Chilgrove Gin - made with grapes in Sussex

The Cambridge Distillery is the world's first 'gin tailor', famed for creating bespoke spirits in an array of innovative flavours (www.cambridgedistillery.co.uk). Sample at Michelin-starred restaurant Alimento in Cambridge, an hour's train ride from London, where the distillery created an exciting truffle and Lady Grey gin (www.restaurantalimento.co.uk).

Chase Distillery is known for the quintessentially British flavours of its hand-made spirits, such as rhubarb vodka, made with fresh, local fruit (www.chasedistillery.co.uk). Enjoy at the Chase family's Verzon House Hotel, a stone's throw from the distillery in Herefordshire (near the border of England and Wales), where all produce is sourced within a 30-mile radius (www.verzonhouse.com).

Black Cow Vodka is the world's first pure milk vodka, made in rural Dorset by dairy farmer Jason Barber (www.blackcow.co.uk). Dorset chef and foody investor Mark Hix has championed the tippie; sample the smooth, creamy vodka in inventive cocktails at Mark's Bar in Soho (www.marksbar.co.uk).

Wales



Try Dà Mhìle's seaweed gin with seafood and you'll never look back!

Welsh distillery Dà Mhìle's seaweed gin is distilled with 16 botanicals to complement seafood, including dill, oregano and parsley, before being infused with local seaweed for three weeks, which adds flavour and salinity, and its greeny-yellow hue (www.damhile.co.uk). Sample at the historic Gwesty'r Emllyn Hotel in Newcastle, West Wales - a two-hour drive from Cardiff (www.gwestyremlynhotel.co.uk/index.php).

Penderyn Distillery in South Wales, an hour's drive from Cardiff, is renowned for its award-winning single malt whisky. Located in the spectacular foothills of the Brecon Beacons, the natural landscape provides the spirit's distinctive taste, distilled with world famous Brecon water (www.welsh-whisky.co.uk). Try a glass at celebrated Welsh poet Dylan Thomas' preferred watering hole, the Browns Hotel, in nearby town Laugharne (www.browns-hotel.co.uk).

Northern Ireland

Shortcross Gin's distinctive floral aroma is reminiscent of summer meadows thanks to its hand-foraged local botanicals, including elderberries and wild clover. Distilled with water from the Boyd's family well, the gin is hand bottled by the family too. Shortcross is the first craft gin distillery to open in Northern Ireland in County Down, a 45 minutes drive from Belfast (www.shortcrossgin.com). Try it at Ox Restaurant in Belfast, which has a dedicated gin menu (www.oxbelfast.com).

The spirit-ual gift - specialist drink emporiums in Britain

Whether you want to buy a British beverage to take home as a gift or just pick a new tippie to try while on your trip, there are shops, and then there are *shops* in which to do such things.

Hedonism Wines in the heart of Mayfair, in London, is a bit like a temple to wine. With 5,500 wines and 2,000 spirits gracing the shelves and lining the walls, you should find what you're looking for - whether you want to spend under £30 or are prepared to dispense with more than £3000. You can try wines from the shop's 'Enomatic' machines - choosing between 45 to taste at any one time - and kids are even welcomed into a play area while you nose, taste, and choose your bottle. <http://hedonism.co.uk>



Hedonism Wines in London is a temple to all things viticultural

Berry Bros & Rudd are wine and spirit merchants, not just to anyone but the Royal Household - so the store in central London's St James's Street holds two Royal Warrants declaring they supply to The Queen and Prince Charles. The store is Britain's oldest wine and spirit merchant, and began trading in 1698. As well as a fantastic selection and good old fashioned service, you can also attend Wine School in the store's Pickering Cellar, with one day and evening courses for those who wish to absorb more of the Berry Bros & Rudd team's vast viticultural knowledge. www.bbr.com

Many department stores have fantastic selections of alcoholic drinks, and one such is London's **Selfridges**, where you can try before you buy in the intimate section devoted to wines and spirits from the world over. Another, in North East England's Newcastle, is **Fenwick**, located in the city centre. You'll find a selection of gins, many of them local - try Jack's, from Northumberland, which is marvellously fragrant - as well as local beers and ales sold by the bottle. www.selfridges.com, www.fenwick.co.uk

Speaking of ale, **Ship in a Bottle** in North West England's Liverpool was the offshoot of the Ship & Mitre, one of the city's most famous pubs - so many people ordered take-away bottles from its extensive range, they decided to set up shop. It's an ale-lover's paradise, and sells more than 400 products, which are mostly beers. Both the Ship-shop and the original pub version would be a good place for a British beer initiate to find out more about it, and to buy those back home a taste of your trip <http://theshipinabottle.co.uk>

Also in Liverpool - and also connected to a 'watering hole' (a British term for a bar or pub!) is Whisky Business, downstairs from Jenny's Bar on what is often described as the city's own Diagon Alley. As the name implies, a towering wall of whisky greets you when you enter, as well as the sounds of Motown drifting through the speakers, but you can also buy Liverpool gin and local craft beers aplenty. Regular whisky tasting events take place too. Follow on Twitter [@LpWhisky](https://twitter.com/LpWhisky)

Inverarity 121 in Glasgow's happening West End is the place to go for buying a bottle, having a taste and talking about all matters alcohol with the experts who run the shop. Wine is the main focus here, but there is a good selection of interesting spirits and even cigars on sale too. The shop's owners are what makes it what it is - like 'wine doctors', you can go in and give them either a specific or quite vague idea of what you're after, and they'll find you a bottle to match you mood and budget. There are regular themed wine tastings too www.inverarity121.com

Time for tea

Tea has been a staple part of the British diet for a long time, but it may come as a surprise to hear that it was thanks to a Portuguese princess that it first became popular in Britain. When Charles II married Catherine of Braganza in 1662, the newly crowned tea-loving Queen Consort soon spread her fondness for the drink around the royal court. The trend took off among the wealthy classes, eventually spreading to the whole country - thanks also to Charles II's expansion of the tea trade during his reign.

Fast forward to the present, and you won't find many Brits who don't drink *at least* one cup of tea every day, as the nation has now well and truly perfected the art of unwinding with a cup of tea at 4 'o' clock, evolving the ritual to include sweet and savoury delicacies to be nibbled at with your brew.

How to drink tea in Britain

There's cream tea, high tea and afternoon tea, and you'll want to make sure you get them right. **Cream tea** is a pot of tea served with scones, clotted cream and jam, and the debate rages as to whether the concept of putting these all together came from Cornwall or Devon, both in south west England. Either way, you can get excellent cream teas in that part of the country - just don't get into the next debate about whether to spread the jam first or the cream first - there are no rules, except the more of both the better!

High tea and afternoon tea are often confused - the former doesn't involve cake, or sweets of any kind, and was originally a savoury-based evening meal eaten by the lower classes involving a mug of tea, bread, vegetables, cheese and occasionally meat. **Afternoon tea** on the other hand, was conceived of as a 'bridge between meals', by the 7th Duchess of Bedford, a young woman called Anna. In the 19th century high society she lived in, it was usual to eat an early breakfast, and then have dinner at around 8pm. Naturally, she got hungry in between, and used to furtively eat a private snack in her bedroom! In time, others in her circle joined her, and a new meal was born. The fashion gained momentum, and today there are afternoon teas of all kinds - from the 'Mad Hatters tea' to afternoon tea on a London bus or Scottish steam train. Just add a companion with some gossip to share, and you've got a relaxing and delicious afternoon ahead.

Traditional teas and classic locations

If you're after a real blowout, London hotels The Ritz, Claridges and The Goring are well-known for their indulgent afternoon teas with all the trimmings: **The Ritz** is probably the most traditional choice - who doesn't want to get back from vacation and say they had 'tea at The Ritz'? Afternoon tea is taken in the opulent Palm Court, a room that drips with luxury and glamour. Choose from 16 loose leaf teas before tucking into cut finger

sandwiches, pastries and cakes, as well as warm scones. Traditional afternoon tea costs £47 per person (www.theritzlondon.com). **Claridges** and **The Goring**, also world-famous London hotels (the latter was the Duchess of Cambridge's residence of choice for the night before she married Prince William), have both previously won the Tea Guild's awards for Top London Afternoon Tea - yes, there are awards - and each offers an array of enticing and delicious sweet and savoury treats to accompany pots of tea and long conversations. Claridges' Classic Afternoon Tea is £50 per person (www.claridges.co.uk), The Goring's is £42.50 per person (www.thegoring.com).

You most certainly don't have to spend almost a hundred pounds on tea for two in London though - the **Fan Museum** in Greenwich has been voted the best value afternoon tea in London on numerous occasions, and offers a real treat in beautiful surrounds. For £7, you can enjoy tea with a scone, cream and jam, a home-baked cake plus admission to one of the capital's quirkiest museums too (www.thefanmuseum.org.uk). If it's a sunny day, seek out one of London's hidden gems, the **Chelsea Physic Garden**. Situated in the heart of Chelsea, it's the ideal oasis to head to after shopping on the Kings Road. Indulge in lavender scones and homemade jam before admiring the world's most northerly outdoor grapefruit tree and the largest outdoor fruiting olive tree in Britain! Each item in the tea is priced separately so you can choose, but a full afternoon tea with cake, scones and tea would cost £20-26. <http://chelseaphysicgarden.co.uk/visit/cafe>



Mmmm... the cakes at the Chelsea Physic Garden, one of London's hidden gems

Get outside of London though, for an afternoon tea in one of Britain's country towns and villages - the perfect backdrop for a civilized rendez-vous with a treasured companion (or a good book), where many places use local ingredients to make delicious jams and preserves, and savoury delicacies.

Scooping the 'Oscar of the tea world', the Tea Guild's top national award last year, **Davenports Tea Room** in **Cheshire**, northern England, is a favourite not only of local residents, but customers have been known to come from as far away as Scotland to sample the afternoon tea. Why? Its scones are made to a closely guarded recipe from the 1930s, while the décor is Alice in Wonderland themed (author Lewis Carroll was born less than two miles away.) Davenports is a 30 minute drive from Cheshire, Manchester and Liverpool. Cream tea is served, at £4.95 per person, and afternoon tea is £15.95 per person. <http://davenportsfarmshop.co.uk>

In 2011 **The Angel Hotel** in **Abergavenny**, on the edge of Wales's Brecon Beacons, won the Tea Guild's top award. The historic coaching inn's afternoon tea is served in its Wedgwood room, with edibles prepared daily by the establishment's specialist baker, and a tea library ready to satisfy the thirst. It's priced at £19.80 per person. The cosy hotel is a fantastic place to stay, especially if good food is one of your main drivers for choosing accommodation; it's also fantastically placed to explore the Brecon Beacons National Park on the doorstep, or Wales's beautiful beaches. Abergavenny is a 45 minute drive from Cardiff. www.angelabergavenny.com

When in **Edinburgh**, visit the 'grand old lady of Princes Street', officially known as the **Balmoral Hotel**. Like The Ritz, afternoon tea is served in the hotel's Palm Court, and it too has won Tea Guild accolades. It's £27 per person for the traditional tea, that includes an amuse bouche, the requisite sandwiches and pastries, scones fresh from the oven and a

tempting trolley full of further sweet treats - no need to book anywhere for dinner!
<http://balmoral.skchase.com>

An afternoon tea you won't forget in a hurry is served at **The Old Course Hotel at St Andrews**, Scotland. The town may be famed for golf, but it should also be famous for its fruit scones and lemon pancakes, served with clotted cream and strawberry and pink champagne preserve. Afternoon tea is £20 per person. www.oldcoursehotel.co.uk

Many places offer an afternoon tea for children, meaning you can introduce them to the very civilized tradition early and you never know, when they're older they might return the favour and treat you! The Old Course Hotel is one such place, offering kids a selection of sandwiches - more on the Nutella and peanut butter end of the spectrum than smoked salmon! - with jelly and ice cream, iced fairy cakes and more sweet treats, for £10 per child. Another tea that will appeal to the younger visitor is the Prince and Princess Afternoon Tea at **The Milestone in London**. Under 12's can enjoy finger



Afternoon tea at The Milestone is as beautiful as it is delicious



The Milestone trains children in the art of afternoon tea from an early age!

sandwiches, freshly baked scones with clotted cream and preserves and French pastries, all served alongside cups of delicious hot chocolate. Before sitting down to this tempting menu, the Pastry Chef assists children in decorating their own cupcakes, which they then eat with the rest of their treats. The tea costs £12.50 per child
www.milestonehotel.com

Betty's tea rooms in Harrogate, a town in the northern English region of Yorkshire, are legendary in the north of England. There are six, but Harrogate - an elegant former spa town surrounded by the Yorkshire Dales - was the site

of the first Bettys, which opened in 1919. With over 300 different breads, cakes and chocolates to try, and fifty different types of tea, you may not know what to go for first. The cake trolley - wheeled to your table so you can make your choice - is a classic Bettys touch, as are the 'Fat Rascals' - plump, fruity scones. www.bettys.co.uk

Some people make the journey to **Glasgow** in Scotland simply to take tea at the Willow Tea Rooms and marvel at the elegant designs of Charles Rennie Mackintosh, one of the city's most famous sons. The Room de Luxe, with silver furniture and beaded glasswork, is exactly as it was when Mackintosh created it in 1904, as is the Gallery, with darker, more masculine decor. Shortbread is the classic accompaniment to tea in Scotland, but at the Willow it's also worth trying their home-made meringues, and there is a special kids afternoon tea menu. Afternoon tea is priced £12.95. Note there are two branches of Willow Tea Rooms in the city centre, one on Sauchiehall Street and one on Buchanan Street. The Sauchiehall St branch was designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh.

www.willowtearooms.co.uk

Unusual locations for an afternoon tea

On a London Routemaster bus

What could be more fun than a bus tour in a vintage London double decker bus? Adding an afternoon tea to the tour. BB Bakery launched an afternoon tea with a difference in April



Afternoon tea on the go! And in a vintage London routemaster bus, no less, with BB Bakery

2014, which takes in The London Eye, Big Ben, The Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey, St James's Park, Buckingham Palace, Hyde Park, The Royal Albert Hall, Marble Arch, Piccadilly Circus, Nelson's Column, Downing Street and more as you sip tea and eat macarons, mini cupcakes, sandwiches and more! It's £45 for adults, £35 for children (aged 6-11). www.bbbakery.co.uk/our-bakeries/afternoon-tea-bus-tour

Tea and politics at the Houses of Parliament, London

As an optional add-on to the popular 'Blue Badge' guided tours of the Houses of Parliament, afternoon tea is now being served in the elegant Terrace Pavilion of the House of Commons, with views over the River Thames. The tea serves up treats such as citrus-marinated Scottish salmon with cream cheese, lemon curd and chive on a mini bagel and Valronha chocolate delice. See the website for availability; tea costs £27 in addition to the cost of the admission ticket. www.parliament.uk/visiting

Tea on a steam train on the Bo'ness & Kinneil Railway near Edinburgh, Scotland

With seats available on the newly restored buffet car dating back to the 1960s, visitors on board a lovingly-restored steam locomotive can indulge in afternoon tea. The journey lasts just over an hour and ten minutes and there is much more to see at the site including Scotland's largest railway museum, less than an hour's drive from Edinburgh and Glasgow. Afternoon Tea is £10 per person with a train ticket (which is £9 for an adult). www.bkrailway.co.uk

Tea at a tucked away 15th century cottage in North Wales

History, natural beauty and fabulous cakes combine to make Tu Hwnt I'r Bont in North Wales, really worth seeking out. Tucked away in the village of Llanwrst, on the eastern border of the spectacular Snowdonia National Park in North Wales, the cottage dates back to 1480 and is almost hidden beneath a covering of ivy that glows scarlet in the autumn. Only open Friday-Monday, everything is home-made, including 'Bara Brith' - a traditional Welsh tea bread. Llanwrst is around two hours drive from Manchester; trains from Manchester Piccadilly station take 2hrs 50 mins, changing at Llandudno. Full Welsh afternoon tea is £11.70, cream tea £5.40. www.tuhwntirbont.co.uk

When High Tea really means high

Tea comes with a view at both Aqua Shard, situated in Western Europe's tallest building, The Shard, and at Paramount, which offers the highest tea in London at the top of the Centre Point building on Tottenham Court Road. At Aqua Shard you can expect Vanilla and raisin or orange blossom scones on the menu, alongside the signature 'The Shard' opera

cake, while at Paramount teas include Jasmine Pearls, hand-rolled and scented with fresh jasmine flowers for a rich, round taste.

Afternoon tea at Paramount costs £28, at Aqua Shard £29.50.

www.paramount.uk.net, <http://the-shard.com/restaurants/aquashard>

Step back in time at these vintage tea spots

Casa Angelina, Edinburgh, Scotland

If fashion is your thing, take tea vintage style. Edinburgh's Casa Angelina has a trunk full of vintage dresses and accessories that you can raid before having your afternoon tea in a totally new outfit! Adult Vintage Tea Parties are priced £16.95 per person.

www.casaangelina.co.uk/vintage-afternoon-tea-parties

The Tea Cosy, Brighton, Sussex, England

If you're after a slice of English eccentricity with your tea, The Tea Cosy in Brighton is the place to come. The walls are crammed with Royal memorabilia (there's even a life-sized cut out of the queen), with union jack flags and dolls dangling from the ceiling, and even the menu is royal-themed. Brighton is 50 minutes from London Victoria by train.

www.theteacosy.co.uk

The Fourteas, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, England

Step back into a different era with afternoon tea at the Fourteas, a 1940s-themed tea room in the heart of Stratford upon Avon, the town most famous as the birthplace of William Shakespeare. Twin a visit to the Royal Shakespeare Theatre with afternoon tea at the Fourteas, where the walls are dotted with vintage posters and loose-leaf teas and home-made cakes and scones are served up with classic 1940's style. Stratford upon Avon is home to the Royal Shakespeare Company, and several historic houses linked to William Shakespeare. Stratford is around two hours' drive west of London; trains from London Marylebone take two hours. www.thefourteas.co.uk

The Old Post Office, Lisbane, County Down, Northern Ireland

Housed in a Grade B-listed thatched building, the Old Post Office Tea Rooms & Gallery dates back to the 1840s. Situated on the picturesque shores of Strangford Lough in the village of Lisbane, the restaurant's charm is its beautifully restored interior, which includes original bog oak beams and features homely nooks and crannies. Famed for their good home cooking, mouth-watering tray-bakes, breads and homemade gateaux, staff at the Old Post Office Tea Rooms use fresh local produce prepared on site. As well as the Tea Rooms, there is also a gift shop and a gallery for local artists. Lisbane is a 20-minute drive south of Belfast. www.oldpostofficelisbane.co.uk



Instagrammable *and* delicious! Themed afternoon teas

Keep your eyes peeled for teas themed around special events or anniversaries, as many restaurants and hotels celebrate such occasions with a creatively conceived afternoon tea - from

Wimbledon to Wonka, the possibilities are endless for shaping cakes and designing accompanying cocktails (tea-time, of course, is swiftly followed by cocktail hour).

The **Pret-a-Portea** at London hotel The Berkeley is a fave for fashionistas: every season the hotel launches a new afternoon tea that takes its inspiration from the latest catwalk styles. From Miu Miu handbags to Christian Louboutin heels, with Prada coats and Victoria Beckham dresses all delicately playing a double role as cakes, macaroons and mousses, it's *almost* too good-looking to eat. Almost. (£41 per person, www.the-berkeley.co.uk/fashion-afternoon-tea).

The **Chesterfield Mayfair** offers traditional afternoon teas, as well as vegetarian and gluten teas. They are also worth checking out for themed teas - when Charlie and the Chocolate Factory The Musical opened in 2013 they launched a delightful Wonka themed afternoon tea (no longer available, but look out for other themed teas); coming up in summer 2014 is a honey-themed Afternoon Bee, as well as a Gentlemen's Tea in time for Father's Day in the UK. www.chesterfieldmayfair.com/bar-and-dining/afternoon-tea/our-afternoon-teas

2015 will mark 150 years since Alice's Adventures in Wonderland was published, which brought us characters like the Red Queen, the White Rabbit and - of course - the Mad Hatter. At **The Sanderson Hotel** in London, a special Mad Hatter's Afternoon Tea will charm anyone with a penchant for the odd, and nonsensical. Menus are hidden inside vintage books, and napkins wrapped with riddles, teapots are adorned with kings and queens and sandwich plates featuring zebras, birdcages, carousels and ticking clocks. There's a tick-tock Victoria sponge clock, a green tea and white chocolate mousse served in a chocolate tea cup and even a 'drink me' potion... Prices start at £38, £30 for children. www.morganshotelgroup.com/originals/originals-sanderson-london/eat-drink/mad-hatters-afternoon-tea

DIY Afternoon Tea - learn the craft and eat the results!

If you're after a delicious hands-on experience while visiting Britain, learn the secrets behind the perfect afternoon tea with Giuliana Orme in her north London house. After you've had a tour of Giuliana's beautiful Victorian home you will be led into the kitchen to get cooking! With shortbread, scones, sandwiches and tea on the menu, it's a quintessentially British spread that you can learn to impress friends back at home and take a slice of holiday with you. Don't worry if cooking isn't your forte - all abilities are welcomed. Giuliana peppers the lesson with interesting information about the history of afternoon tea and fun British etiquette facts, and at the end you get to enjoy the fruits of your labour! Afternoon tea lessons costs £70 per person. Home-baking lessons are also available. www.afternoontealessons.com

Coffee? It's the new tea!

Britain is buzzing! Coffee culture continues to grow and the so-called 'Third Wave' movement - which focuses on producing high-quality coffee to be savoured, appreciated and taken as seriously as wine - has swept through the nation.

There are coffee shops throughout Britain that take coffee-drinking to a new level, many of which have their own in-house roasteries and where customers can try out 'cupping', tasting sessions that help you to get more depth from your brew.



Discover high-quality coffee across Britain

Here are ten great coffee shops in Britain that offer bean-lovers and initiates alike unique caffeine experiences:

The Attendant, London

Probably one of the most novel venues to serve up steaming mugs of coffee, The Attendant was formerly a late 19th-century gentlemen's toilet. Sit at authentic porcelain fixtures for artisan Caravan coffee (blended from green coffee beans from single estates and farms) while the milk comes from a small dairy farm in Somerset, west England.

www.the-attendant.com

Bold Street Coffee, Liverpool, north-west England

While this is an award-winning coffee shop and regularly chalks up reviews such as 'the highest quality of coffee with the least pretence imaginable', Bold Street café goes that step further; hosting art exhibitions, acoustic gigs and coffee experience nights.

www.boldstreetcoffee.co.uk

Brewsmiths, Birmingham, central England

Cosy is the byword at Brewsmiths; located beneath a railway arch in Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter, you'll be able to sip a cup of coffee surrounded by cushions, comfy chairs...and one or two cuddly toys! And there's no need to drink in a rush - customers can sit back and relax over one of the coffee shop's board games.

www.facebook.com/brewsmiths

Climpson & Sons, London

It's home from home here - Climpson & Sons café in Hackney, east London, is supplied by their eponymous roasters, located close by. It's here they roast espresso blends and a range of single origin beans. At the café you'll find a breakfast and lunch menu using produce sourced from nearby businesses, to complete the local experience.

www.climpsonandsons.com

Coffee #1, Cardiff, Wales

It might have grown to more than 35 shops in Wales and south-west England but Coffee #1 aims to retain the individual character of each of its locations. Where possible, they are housed in period buildings, use original fireplaces and antique Chesterfield sofas and the

original Cardiff location fulfils that brief. Take a look at its wall of fame - internationally renowned Welsh actor Matthew Rhys, singer Joss Stone and Sporty Spice Mel C have all been customers at Coffee #1! www.coffee1.co.uk

Elephant House, Edinburgh, Scotland

This Edinburgh coffee and tea shop is as famous for its clientele as it is for its Arabica coffee; J.K. Rowling wrote some of her early Harry Potter novels here, and Ian Rankin, author of the Rebus novels, has also been a frequent customer. The charming elephant ornaments and motifs that adorn the coffee shop add to the warm, friendly atmosphere. www.elephanthouse.biz

Hermitage Road, Hertfordshire, south-east England

The exposed brickwork and beautiful tiling of the 1930s building that this coffee shop calls home enhance the independent coffee shop experience. Using beans from the Has Bean Coffee roasterie to produce its own Hermitage Road blend, customers can enjoy their coffee to their own music as the managers are happy to plug in their playlists! www.hermitagerd.co.uk/coffee

Perky Peacock, York, north England

Vying for the title of the location of England's oldest coffee shop, the Perky Peacock is housed in a 14th-century stone tower by Lendal Bridge in York. Formerly a toll tower, reviews of its coffee call it 'up there with the best', with beans brought in from renowned roasterie Has Been Coffee. It also has another outlet on historic Gillygate Street. <http://perkypeacockcoffee.co.uk>

Timberyard, London

Coffee is taken very seriously at Timberyard, where a Jabberwocky blend is used for its espresso-based drinks and baristas can prepare single origin coffee should you prefer. Describing itself as a 'versatile lifestyle space' you'll be sipping your chosen brew in a large two-storey space that has iPads on the counters and colourful furnishings. There are 15 teas and organic hot chocolate to tempt the tastebuds too. www.timberyardlondon.com

The Window, Norwich, east England

Is this the world's smallest café? Diminutive in size, it's certainly a contender but its coffee is big on flavour. Owner Hayley serves her own blends that change with the 'seasons and mood'. A range of tempting cakes are baked fresh every day, lending to the cosy, homely feel of this coffee shop, which was named 'Best for Unique Blends' in *The Independent's* 50 Best Coffee Shops in Britain. www.thewindowcoffee.com

An homage to cake - ten shops for sweet teeth

Tea and cake has always been an intrinsic part of the British diet, but these days it's possible to find the most spectacular creations even in small regional teashops and bakeries. The classic 'cream tea' is still a popular favourite - fresh scones, clotted cream and jam - but for those with more adventurous tastes there are ever-more creative taste combinations to try.

1. The Cake Shop, Woodbridge, Suffolk, east England

The Cake Shop is a family business that has been hand-producing cakes and bread in the town of Woodbridge since 1946. Cakes range from the simple - iced current buns or chocolate brownies - through to multi-layered gateaux piled with fresh fruit and hand-made flavoured creams. www.cakeshopbakery.co.uk



Dramatic cakes and a chocolate bar make Choccywoccydoodah a must-visit for chocolate fans

2. Humble Pie Bakery, Glasgow, Scotland

Humble Pie has won awards for its pretty cupcakes, lined up in neat rows in spotless glass cases in the chic white bakery in Bothwell village, around 20 minutes' drive from Glasgow. Flavours range from marshmallow to red velvet, and there are gluten-free options in both the cupcakes and full-size cakes. The bakery has table space, so that you can sit over your tea and cake, or make up a box to take away.

www.humblepiebakery.co.uk

3. Choccywoccydoodah, Brighton, south-east England

A must for chocolate-lovers, the wonderfully-named Choccywoccydoodah specialises in ornately-decorated cakes that have real drama, along with neat bags of bite-sized chocolatey treats. The original branch in Brighton, an hour's train journey from London, is stacked with kitsch cakes and a chocolate bar, where you can take tea and cake and admire the intricate creations, while a new sister shop and cafe in London offers similar treats. www.choccywoccydoodah.com

4. Konditor & Cook, London



London loves Konditor & Cook and so will visitors

Cake-loving Londoners have been trekking to Waterloo for Gerhard Jenne's amazing creations for more than 20 years, but the good news is there are now six branches of K&C dotted around the capital. Cakes range from curly-wurly brownies to classics such as coffee-walnut and Victoria sponge, while the Whiskey-Bomb is an amazing confection that looks like scrunched up velvet. K&C shops are in Soho, Borough Market, the City, Waterloo and Chancery Lane.

www.konditorandcook.com

5. Cocorico, Cardiff, Wales

It's easy to tell that Cocorico is owned by a Frenchman; the patisserie is light and crisp and there's everything from Millefeuilles to Chantilly choux buns, all made by hand. But there's classic British treats too, fresh strawberries and cream gateaux and rich chocolate cakes,

lightened with raspberries or seasonal fruits. Eat in, or choose a box of smaller cakes for a picnic in the beautiful Welsh countryside. www.cocoricopatisserie.co.uk

6. The Manna House, Edinburgh, Scotland

The team at Manna House bake overnight, every night, to ensure maximum freshness for their wide variety of cakes and breads. Famous for extravagant meringues, the sweet treats range from muffins and madeleines to slabs of light and moist carrot or banana cake, decadent chocolate fudge-cake or mini-glazed mousse cakes. There are around a dozen varieties of cake to try each day and a small number of tables and bar stools to rest up on while you indulge. www.themannahousebakery.co.uk

7. Leona's Tea Room, Portrush, Northern Ireland

One of Northern Ireland's best-kept culinary secrets, Leona's Tea Room is tucked away in the Maghera Buoy hotel in Portrush, (around 2.5 hours by train from Belfast) but is open to non-residents. Linger over the Big Table, groaning under a huge selection of three-tier sponge cakes, brownies, scones, cup cakes and pies. Every bite is baked on site and the prices are pleasingly affordable. www.magherabuoy.co.uk

8. Tan Lan Bakery, north Wales

There are now two branches of Tan Lan; a shop in Rhos on Sea and a shop and cafe in Conwy, which offers the chance to linger over one of the sumptuous cakes. The team of 18 cooks up a huge range of products, ranging from inventive treats such as the Honey Bun - a sweet bun injected with honey nectar - to old favourites such as apple turnovers and custard tarts. Bara Brith - a traditional Welsh sweet bread, is a must-try. www.tanlanbakery.co.uk

9. Fitzbillies, Cambridge, east England

History comes with every bite in this historic bakery and café, which first opened in 1922. Famed for its sticky Chelsea Buns, many of the cakes - buns included - are made to the traditional



Fitzbillies in Cambridge have been baking cakes for more than 90 years

recipes used by the café when it opened more than 90 years ago. Cakes change daily, but may include anything from a rich chocolate Sachertorte to cream-filled choux pastries, fluffy scones or perfectly-formed mini cakes in classic flavours. It also has a good gluten-free selection.

www.fitzbillies.com

10. Ottolenghi, London

One of the biggest success stories on the London dining scene in recent years, Ottolenghi offers a daily-changing selection of beautiful cakes and tarts, including spectacular meringues that are enough for two. There are now four

branches in the capital, in Islington, Notting Hill, Belgravia and Soho, offering everything from fig and almond cake to lemon cheesecake and poppy seed tartlets, with a good selection of gluten-free treats. Definitely one for more adventurous tastes.

www.ottolenghi.com



Ottolenghi- temptation that's hard to resist

Send yourself to cookery school!

If you want to learn how to knead dough, fillet fish or create a mouth-watering chocolate cake, then Britain has the perfect cookery class for you! Here are 16 of the experiences you can enjoy on holiday - and return home an even better cook!



Socialise and cook at buzzing new London cookery school, Jenius Social

1. Jenius Social, Islington, North London

A new concept for 2014, Jenius Social is all about creating connections through food, so if you like meeting new people *and* enjoy eating, this is the place for you. All courses are hands on and led by an expert chef, with a wide range of courses covering Mexican to French. Visitors to the country should go for the Best of British, of course! You can also learn how to throw a successful dinner party or try out the 'Pimp My Profiteroles' course to impress guests with your choux pastry and fill them with things like Blueberry & Star Anise Compote, White Chocolate or Caramelized Apple & Cinnamon, Butterscotch Sauce (£45).

www.jeniusocial.co.uk

2. Lighthouse Bakery, Bodiam, Sussex, South East England

Bakery schools don't tend to come with an inspiring view over a 14th century castle, but at the Lighthouse Bakery it's all part of the experience. You can try your hand at American, Italian, Scandinavian and Jewish baking (what is more global than bread?!), but the Traditional British Baking course is a must for those on vacation in Britain who would like to take a taste of the country back home. Learn it all, from the Welsh Bara Brith to the Chelsea Bun; courses are £175 and include lunch, recipe notes, an apron and the delicious produce you have conjured up. Trains go from London Charing Cross directly to Robertsbridge, and it's a 10 minute taxi ride to the bakery from there.

www.lighthousebakery.co.uk

3. Claremont Farm, Liverpool, North West England

Cookery courses at Claremont are a guaranteed laugh as well as promising to turn you into a better cook. As it's a farm, all the ingredients are as fresh as can be, so the meal you'll eat as part of your day course will be delicious. Courses range from the sweet - 'Cakey Bakey Tart' - to the savoury 'Pickle-Curry-Spice' and full day courses are all priced £89. You can also pick your own fruit and get a first hand flavour of the British countryside at Claremont from mid June to August, and if you're around from late April to mid June you're in for a treat because the farm is famed for its asparagus, which is in season then. Claremont Farm is in the Wirral, 20 mins from central Liverpool. Liverpool is 2 hours 15 minutes from London.

www.claremontfarm.co.uk

4. Afternoon tea courses, London

Giuliana Ormes holds afternoon tea courses in her home, giving overseas visitors the chance to experience British hospitality - and have a tour of a real Victorian house in north London. Start your lesson with a brief history of afternoon tea, before tucking into making shortbread, smoked salmon and cream cheese sandwiches, scones and sampling teas,

before tucking into your creations. Tea lessons cost £70 per person and take place on Tues, and Giuliana also runs home baking lessons once a week too.

www.afternoontealessons.com

5. Seafood School, Cornwall, England

Rick Stein put Cornwall on the culinary map with his seafood restaurants in Padstow, and you can learn the tricks of the trade at his Seafood School in the town. The courses are designed to cover every aspect of seafood cookery, in his words: 'almost without realising it, you will cover it all from filleting a plaice to stir-frying squid, braising brill to steaming sea bass'. New for 2014 are his 'one dish evening workshops', that let you focus on perfecting seafood paella, or Madras fish curry, among others. Reach Padstow by a four-hour train journey from London to the nearest station Bodmin Parkway, and it's a 15-minute journey from there.

www.rickstein.com/Seafood-School.html

6. Butchery at the Ginger Pig, London, England

Butchery classes at The Ginger Pig in central London's Marylebone are carried out by a team of skilled butchers and they offer a range of evening courses aimed at teaching all

about the meat; where it comes from, how and when it is used and also a range of basic butchery skills. You will learn about all aspects of cutting meat, the ageing process, how to make salami, cured meats and sausages. Also, the cutting of beef, lamb and pork will be covered on the respective evenings. All the London classes are held at the Ginger Pig's Marylebone shop - it also has a stall in Borough Market, close to London Bridge. Classes cost £135 per person and include the lesson, a two course meal with wine and the joint or sausages you have prepared to take home with you.



Butchery classes and The Ginger Pig show carnivores to cure, cut and cook meat to perfection

www.learnbutchery.co.uk

7. Llanerch - a cookery school with a vineyard next door, Vale of Glamorgan, Wales

Angela Gray's cookery school uses the best seasonal ingredients, so the classes vary according to what is available at the time of year. They also offer themed classes - cooking for the Chinese New Year, Christmas or Easter. The cookery school is part of Llanerch Vineyard, a working Welsh vineyard in the Glamorgan countryside, and you can find it 20 minutes from Cardiff, with a bistro, restaurant, hotel rooms and self-catering cottages on site.

<http://llanerch-vineyard.co.uk/angela-gray-s-cookery-school>

8. The Bertinet Kitchen Cookery School, Bath, England

Do you feel a need to knead? The Bertinet School in the centre of beautiful, historic Bath, specialises in breadmaking, for both amateurs and professionals. Richard Bertinet, originally from Brittany in France, trained as a baker from the age of 14 and, having moved to the UK in the late 1980s, cooked at Chewton Glen Hotel before opening the school in

2005. As well as baking classes, there are lessons for kids too - ice cream making among them. Reach Bath in 90 minutes by train from London or in just an hour from Wales' capital, Cardiff.

www.thebertinetkitchen.com

9. Demuths Vegetarian Cookery School, Bath, England

Bath is home to another great cookery school specialising in the needs on non-meat eaters. Local produce is the name of the game, as is creativity, with courses inspired by cuisines from all over the world, and fun events like Caribbean rum tasting (£25) and parents & kids cooking together classes (£65 for parent and child).

www.vegetariancookeryschool.com

10. Cooking with Claire, Kinloch Lodge, Scotland

Celebrated Scottish chef Claire Macdonald runs three day residential courses at Kinloch Lodge, a luxury hotel on the romantic island of Skye. She is married to Lord Macdonald, Godfrey Macdonald of Macdonald, High Chief of Clan Donald, and the hotel has a Michelin star, the kitchen headed up by Brazilian-born Marcello Tully, with whom you can also learn to cook. The courses combine teaching cookery skills with a chance to explore this beautiful Hebridean island. A three day course with all meals, accommodation and two mornings of cookery demonstrations costs between £555-705 depending on the room. It's a great opportunity to drive the 60 miles from Inverness, in the Scottish Highlands, through some spectacular scenery. The city of Inverness itself is served by an international airport.

www.kinloch-lodge.co.uk/Cookery.aspx

11. Bettys, Harrogate, Yorkshire, England



Bettys tea shops are a Yorkshire institution, while its cookery schools teach the secrets of the region's delicious cuisine to novice cooks and experts!

Bettys has been serving up delicious food from its famous Yorkshire tea rooms since 1919, and it also runs cookery courses at its Harrogate premises, where you can master everything from bread-baking to chocolate-making, or from one-pot wonders to lavish four-course meals. There are dozens of courses: try 'Yorkshire Entertaining' for a true taste of the region, where you'll use local ingredients to whip up a delicious meal (all day, £145); 'A Slice of Bettys', that unveils the mysteries of the tea rooms' famous sweet treats (4.5 hours, £110); or 'Naughty But Nice', which teaches you the art of afternoon tea treats like Yorkshire spiced tea cakes and Viennese whirls (all day; £180). Harrogate is just a 45-minute drive from the historic city of York, and a three-hour train journey from London.

www.bettys.co.uk/About_Bettys/Bettys_Cookery_School.aspx

12. Gluten-free cooking at River Cottage, Dorset, England

TV chef and writer Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall offers a range of courses at his Dorset cookery school (around 30 miles from the city of Exeter in Devon, south-west England)

from 'Pig in a Day' to cheese-making. But for those with special dietary needs, there is a chance to learn more about gluten-free cooking. The day combines hands-on cookery and demonstration-based recipes, giving you the support and tuition to follow a gluten-free diet. It all starts with a tractor ride down to the farm, to meet host and nutritionist Naomi Devlin, and see for yourself the famous River Cottage farmhouse and kitchen garden. Courses include 7 practical sessions, morning tea, lunch and a tractor ride to the cottage (!) for £185.

www.rivercottage.net/shop/product/gluten_free_cookery

13. The Culinary Cottage, Abergavenny, South East Wales

The Culinary Cottage is a cookery school you'll leave from armed with new ideas and the motivation to put all your skills into practice! Courses are run by Penny Lewis, whose teaching skills match her culinary talents (attested to by the dignitaries, celebrities and royalty she's cooked for), with courses that are accessible and easy to follow - and that lead to delicious results. There are several courses that last 3 to 5 days, but if you're time short, try the half day Cakes & Bakes or Vegetarian Entertaining, if meat is not your thing. Half day courses cost £65, one day courses £120 and longer courses are priced depending on length and whether residential or not - you can stay in lovely four star accommodation, and enjoy walking in the beautiful Black Mountains.



Penny Lewis of The Culinary Cottage is a fantastic teacher and cook and her Abergavenny school is idyllically located - what could be better for the budding chef?

www.theculinarycottage.co.uk

14. Artisan food in Sherwood Forest, Nottinghamshire, England

In a Nottinghamshire location more commonly associated with the folk hero Robin Hood, the School of Artisan Food offers courses in breadmaking, cheesemaking, brewing, butchery, charcuterie and preserving. Learn about English Wine in a two hour tasting session (£35), or the teaming of beer and cheese in a half day course (£35), both 'mini' courses, or else if you have longer there are 3 day courses in cheesemaking and artisan baking. The school is easily reached from London; a two-hour train journey to nearby Nottingham, which in turn is a 45-minute drive.

www.schoolofartisanfood.org

15. Local treats - particularly for men in need of culinary skills at Belle Isle, County Fermanagh, Northern Ireland

Belle Isle Cookery School opened its doors in 2003, in state-of-the-art facilities in the grounds of Belle Isle Castle by Lough Erne in County Fermanagh (around a two-hour drive from Belfast) - the first school of its kind in Northern Ireland. It offers a wide range of courses for both complete beginners and those who are more experienced. Fish and seafood lovers can be guaranteed the local catch to learn to fillet, prepare and cook, or for the gents, 'Men in the Kitchen' shows the blokes how to bake bread, butcher meat or fish and present a three course meal to the rest of the family!

www.irishcookeryschool.com

16. Nick Nairn's cookery school, Aberdeen (north east Scotland) and Lake Monteith (Stirling, central Scotland)



Get hands on with a Scottish cooking legend at Nick Nairn's cookery schools

Nick Nairn has had a long and pioneering career as a chef, and is one of the UK food industry's heroes - he's run restaurants, been a celebrity chef and food campaigner, and even cooked the banquet for The Queen's 80th birthday celebrations. Nick set up a cookery school on the beautiful Lake of Monteith (2 hours from Edinburgh by train) in 2000, and he opened another in the centre of Aberdeen in 2012.

Though other chefs work at the schools, you can choose to have Nick Nairn himself teach you all about Scottish cookery, learning a three course meal from the master for £249. Or else there are three-hour classes for £79, where you could whip up a Sirloin steak and white choc

brulée, or else go for a Quick Cook class, and perfect a one dish to impress everyone back home (£59).

www.nicknairncookschool.com

Food trails - follow the path to satisfied appetites

Food trails are becoming a well-established trend in rural Britain, with local farmers, food producers and pubs linking up to offer visitors the chance to discover the culinary heritage of an area while exploring the countryside. We take a look at a few on offer.

Clwydian Range Food Trail, north Wales

The Clwydian mountains in north Wales run from Llandegla in the south up to Prestatyn in the north, and the region has a long tradition of food production. The trail combines traditional businesses such as Llaeth y Llan dairy, famous for its wonderful cheeses, to the Denbigh Chocolate Shop - a must-visit for cocoa addicts. There's also the chance to try local cider, home-made patés and stop for a pint at a traditional Welsh inn. A car is necessary to explore the trail, but it can easily be done in a day. www.foodtrail.co.uk

Wight Taste Trail, south England

A favourite for family holidays for decades, the sandy beaches and rolling hills of the Isle of Wight, just three miles off the south coast of England, have become something of a gourmet destination in recent years. The Wight Taste Trail brings together 24 different foodie stops dotted around the island, from gastropubs to delicatessens, vineyards and garlic farms. One of the stops, the Hambrough, is a restaurant with rooms that makes a great base for exploring the island. The Isle of Wight is accessible by passenger and car ferry from Southampton, which is around 90 minutes' train journey from London.

www.wightlink.co.uk/isle-of-wight-guide-and-events/eating-out/wight-taste-trail,
www.thehambrough.com

Ribble Valley Food Trail, Lancashire, north-west England

A great way to explore the stunning landscapes of rural Lancashire, the Ribble Valley Food Trail links the market towns of Clitheroe and Longridge, and a number of rural villages in

the area. There are 34 suggested places to visit, from traditional inns to organic farms and ice-cream parlours. A car is essential for exploring the trail; Clitheroe is around four hours' drive north-west of London.

www.ribblevalleyfoodtrail.com

East Lancashire Railway, north west England

If the combination of stunning countryside, tucked away villages, hidden gems (and pubs), fascinating history and a ride on an heritage steam train isn't enough, the team at East Lancashire Railway has teamed up with some of the city's official tour guides to create the now infamous Rail Ale Trail. Go on a journey to discover some of the Irwell Valley's most beautiful locations and exceptional pubs, all linked together by the railway. Whether you are an ale lover, cider aficionado or cream soda supporter, you will find something to suit your taste buds at every station along the route. £11 (ticket only).

www.eastlancsrailway.org.uk

Scottish Seafood Trail, western Scotland

For lovers of shellfish, there's no better place to head for than the west coast of Scotland. The waters are rich in crabs and lobster, shrimps and mussels and the coastline is dotted with everything from simple shacks to Michelin-starred restaurants, all with a strong focus on seafood. The seafood trail spans the coast and islands between Glasgow and Oban, with inns, restaurants and hotels all included; the website can also help with planning an itinerary, with accommodation and route suggestions. www.theseafoodtrail.com

Mourne Foods Cycle Trail, Northern Ireland

A great option for those who don't want to drive, the Mourne Foods Cycle Trail links the best local food producers in the Mourne Area of Northern Ireland - combining gentle cycling, with the Mourne mountains as a backdrop - with the chance to load up the bike bags with lots of fantastic local produce. It's a great way to meet local people as well as stock up on hand-made cheese, bread, cakes and other treats. The trail is arranged by the Enniskeen Hotel in Newcastle, around 45 minutes south of Belfast. There are no direct trains but taxis can be arranged. www.enniskeen.com

Top tips for budget bites in Britain

Pre-Theatre

Many city restaurants offer 'pre-theatre' menus, which are a great way to have a meal at a restaurant that would perhaps normally be too expensive. They are often short menus, with perhaps just two options for each course, and normally run from around 17.00-19.00. If you are seated just before 19.00, you may need to give your table up within an hour or so, but this is a great way to try pricier eateries.

Greasy Spoons

'Greasy spoon' is the affectionate name for simple cafés where foods such as ciabatta and balsamic vinegar are alien concepts. Most towns and cities will have a 'greasy spoon'; look out for electric lighting, plastic tables and signs for cheap 'all-day breakfasts'. Although they may be basic, many serve up excellent English Breakfasts, which might include some -

or all of the following; sausage, bacon, egg, beans, tomato, fried slice (bread), mushrooms, black pudding (blood sausage) and toast. And, of course, a cup of 'splosh' (tea) to wash it all down.

Farmers Markets

In recent years there has been an explosion in farmers markets; often in small towns and villages where farmers come once a month to sell their produce. Ironically, the produce is often more expensive than in shops, but quality and freshness is unbeatable and if you're self-catering or planning a picnic, these are great places to source locally-made cheeses, fresh meats and fish and a wonderful selection of fruit and vegetables.

Soho on the Cheap

Soho, right at the heart of London's West End, is home to some of the capital's most expensive eateries, but there are also bargains to be found. Stockpot, in the heart of Soho, has been serving up cheap, hearty food for 50 years, while Bistro 1 has branches in Soho and Covent Garden, with two-course dinners £11.90. For something more exotic, Bi Bim Bap

serves up cheap and cheerful noodles and dumplings.

www.stockpotlondon.co.uk, www.bistro1.co.uk,
www.bibimbap.co.uk



*Dining alfresco is a great British tradition.
Credit Caravan Club*

The Great British Picnic

Picnicking is a great British tradition, undertaken whether it's brilliant sunshine or pouring with rain (when we sit in the car and eat it). Classic ingredients include pork pies, sausage rolls, sandwiches and fruit, but most towns and villages have delicatessens, where you can pick up fresh olives, humous, baguettes and cold meats. Many National Trust properties allow you to

bring your own picnic and provide eating areas with tables and chairs.

Food from around the world

London is world famous for its huge variety of restaurants, covering each nationality and culture from A (the Afghan Kitchen in Islington) to Z (Shaka Zulu, London's largest South African restaurant). But it's not only the capital that takes your tastebuds on a world tour - there are thriving Chinatowns all over Britain, a 'Balti triangle' to lure Indian food fans to the north of England, Italian gems up in Glasgow and even an Australian restaurant in Manchester (Australasia www.australasia.uk.com).

Indian food hotspots

Birmingham

It's often said that Britain's national dish is curry and Indian food has indeed become as major a staple of the nation's diet as fish and chips, or the roast dinner. The north of England is known for its love of Indian cuisine, with many Indian and Bangladeshi communities in the area giving rise to lots of authentic restaurants. Birmingham has a 'Balti Triangle' and Manchester a 'Curry Mile', both packed with excellent and well-priced options. London is packed with plenty of Indian options, from the cheap and cheerful Brick Lane curry houses to gourmet options in upmarket neighbourhoods.



The British love Indian food

In Birmingham, try out modern Indian restaurant Lasan, to which Gordon Ramsay gave his seal of approval when he visited. The Balti Triangle area comprises three parts of the city that not only offer enticing restaurants, but a snapshot of India in Britain - jewellery shops, dressmakers, sweet shops and music make it feel like a holiday within a holiday. www.lasan.co.uk

See <http://visitbirmingham.com> for information on Indian restaurants and visiting the city. Don't just visit for the food though! A trip to Birmingham will also appeal to those in search of culture and fashion. With the largest pre-Raphaelite collection in the world at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, new arts and media quarter The Custard Factory catering to contemporary art fans, the Bullring shopping centre for shopaholics and the fascinating Jewellery Quarter buzzing with craftspeople creating one off works of art, it's a rich city to explore. And, when you've had enough of Indian, the Birmingham eating-out scene covers 26 other nationalities!

Manchester

In Manchester you're spoilt for choice for Indian dining options and one look at the Manchester Confidential site's Indian restaurant reviews page will show you just how many you have to choose from! (www.manchesterconfidential.co.uk/Food-and-Drink/Indian). Favourites include Shere Khan, a now 'legendary' institution offering good service in a sophisticated setting and Zouk, an elaborately designed contemporary choice, with revamped versions of classic dishes. www.sherekhan.com, www.zoukteabar.co.uk

Cardiff, Wales

Over in Wales, a stone's throw from Cardiff Castle and the Wales Millennium Centre is Moksh, which has received a number of accolades in recent times, including head chef Stephen Gomes sharing the Best Chef award in the Cobra Good Curry Guide, plus the restaurant has been named the best Indian in Wales. With dishes like 'chocolate orange tikka masala' and Welsh Gwyn cheese samosas on the menu, it's an Indian dining experience unlike any other you'll have had. www.moksh.co.uk

Glasgow, Scotland

Glasgow, Scotland has a thriving Indian food scene, ranging from traditional, homestyle dishes across many of its Indian restaurants to dedicated cooking classes. One such restaurant offering the latter is Mister Singh India; as well as offering good, authentic food with a few 'Scottish twists', you can learn how to make Indian dishes as well as eat them. Elsewhere, The Dhabba is famed for its use of natural ingredients handled by award-winning chefs, modelled on the popular roadside diners in North India, while The Wee Curry Shop offers excellent cooking at excellent prices - two courses on its lunchtime menu costs £5.50 - across three Glasgow locations. www.mistersinghsindia.com, www.thedhabba.com, www.weecurryshopglasgow.co.uk

London

Throughout the English capital you'll be spoilt for choice with the wide range of both Indian and Pakistani restaurants. Find the oldest Indian restaurant in London at Veeraswamy; opened in 1926, it sits in a grand and ornate location on Piccadilly, serving delicious gourmet Indian food, and a well-priced Sunday lunch deal of three courses for £26. Fancy an Indian breakfast? You can have Bombay scrambled eggs, kedgeree and South Indian rice pancakes to start your day at this highly acclaimed London restaurant, The Cinnamon Club, whose lunch and dinner dishes are also highly recommended by foodies. And vegetarians can enjoy delicious Keralan thalis (tasting plates) and curries for amazingly cheap prices at Rasa in Stoke Newington, north London. There is another branch off Oxford Street serving meat, fish and seafood, including unmissable prawn curry. www.veeraswamy.com / www.cinnamonclub.com, www.rasarestaurants.com



Tasty Indian dishes

Halal Food in Britain

Halal food is easy to find in Britain, thanks to the large Muslim communities living across its cities, and can be enjoyed in both restaurants and hotels. And finding halal food has become even simpler as a new app, <http://halalspot.co> has recently launched, designed to make it easy to find Halal restaurants and cafés. Visitors in search of Halal food in London, especially, will be spoilt for choice. We take a look at some great halal restaurants; although it is also worth noting that while the restaurants listed below serve Halal dishes, some also serve alcohol.

In London

1. Alounak. A popular eaterie in Notting Hill serving original Iranian cuisine, which offers an enticing menu of mezze, kebabs, seafood and meat dishes.

2. Benares. The flavours of India feature across authentic, yet modern, Indian dishes created by top chef Atul Kochhar in the heart of Mayfair. All lamb and chicken is halal. www.benaresrestaurant.com

3. Chutney Mary. This sumptuously designed, Chelsea-based restaurant has been serving high-quality Indian food for 20 years, with a menu encompassing curries and biryanis, seafood and grills. www.chutneymary.com

4. Dishoom. Discover a relaxed dining atmosphere close to Covent Garden in this contemporary version of Bombay's Irani Cafés, which serves classic dishes from breakfast, through to lunch, dinner and cocktails. www.dishoom.com

5. Tayyabs. Based in Whitechapel in London's historic East End, this daytime and evening restaurant has been operating for more than 30 years and its Punjabi cuisine is 100% halal. www.tayyabs.co.uk

In Britain

1. La Favorita, Birmingham. Traditional Italian cuisine is created using Halal produce and the menu also includes a fusion of Halal Pakistani and Kashmiri dishes. www.lafavorita.co.uk

2. Sahara Restaurant, Brighton. Middle Eastern, Lebanese and North African favourites pepper the eclectic menu; the restaurant operates a Bring Your Own Bottle policy. www.atasteofsahara.com

3. Akbar's, Manchester. With an empire of ten restaurants across the north of England, Akbar's popular Manchester branch opened in 2006. The menu offers old-school favourites and both meat and vegetarian specialities. www.akbars.co.uk

4. Wau Café, Glasgow. A cosy café offering good-value Malaysian and Singaporean-inspired cuisine, ranging from curries and noodle soups to fried noodle and satay dishes. www.waucafe.co.uk

5. Mirchi, Cardiff. South Asian cuisine is the staple of this family run, value-for-money restaurant in Wales' capital, which uses local ingredients where possible to create traditional Indian and Pakistani dishes. www.mirchicardiff.com

Chinese

Chinese food and culture intertwine in Britain's various Chinatowns. London's Chinatown is located right in the heart of the capital, overlapping its theatre district, making a Chinese meal the ideal pre- or post-show dinner choice, plus there are lots of other Chinese restaurants elsewhere in the city. Manchester and Liverpool have vibrant Chinatowns with restaurants, grocery stores, colourful decorations and ornately decorated ceremonial arches.

10 Great Chinese restaurants

1. Bo London, London. This Michelin-star restaurant is described by its own chef Alvin Leung as “it’s fussy and duplicitous, it’s expensive and dictatorial, it’s vain and funny and brilliant and beautiful”, so expect something extraordinary. The menus offer a wide scope of price ranges; for the £27 lunchtime menu you can get three dim sum and a main course, but if you want to splash out, choose the £128 14-course Chefs Menu. You’ll dine on jasmine-smoked quail egg, crispy taro crust and Osetra caviar, spicy lamb soup dumpling, chili crab fun gor, and cod marinated in glutinous rice wine, saffron, miso, samphire, crispy seaweed, dried shrimp and bonito crust. <http://bolondonrestaurant.com>

2. Hakkasan, London. Michelin-starred Chinese restaurant in London’s West End, serving inventive and gourmet Chinese dishes with a twist. If you’re feeling flash you can order luxurious dishes like ‘Peking duck with Qiandao finest caviar’ and Japanese abalone (small sea snails, a delicacy), or else the regular menu includes British produce in dishes like ‘sweet and sour Duke of Berkshire pork’. As well as the a la carte menu, there are ‘signature menus’ offering three courses for £40 at lunchtime and £50-£118 for dinner. www.hakkasan.com



Creative Chinese dishes are on the menu at Hakkasan in London’s West End. Credit Hakkasan Hanway Place

4. Mayflower, Bristol, west England. The city centre based restaurant is renowned for its authentic Chinese dishes, as well as those more often found on menus in Britain. Visitors to the Mayflower can eat as they could in China and dine on delicacies such as fried pig intestines and deep-fried frogs legs in chilli salt. There are four set menus ranging from £16-£20 per person, while a la carte dishes range from around £4 for starters to £15 for mains. www.mayflower-bristol.co.uk

5. BBQ Chinese Restaurant, Manchester, north-west England.

An intensely flavourful menu comes recommended by British food critic Jay Rayner, who says ‘If you go, and everyone should at least once, order one of the hand-pulled noodle dishes. Ours, the Tibetan braised beef, came in a deep, dark stock over which hung a glorious fug of star anise. When the conventional warfare of Lemsip against a cold has failed, this would have to be the nuclear option. GPs should prescribe it. The beef was sweet and soft, and the noodles properly slurpable yet with a bite at the core.’ (Meal for two £40)

6. Red Chilli, Manchester, north-west England.

Manchester blog Creative Tourist says ‘the food is as stunning as the décor is not’ - basic surroundings mean you can focus on your food, which includes highly rated fiery lamb hotpot and Beijing dumplings. ‘First date’ menu £24, ‘Courtship’ £26 and ‘True Love’ £30 (per person, includes several dishes). www.redchillirestaurant.co.uk

7. Happy Gathering, Cardiff, Wales.

Winners of a Trip Advisor Certificate of Excellence in 2012, the Happy Gathering welcomes

children to its tables as much as adults, with a dedicated children's menu for £5.95. While the little ones are tucking into spring rolls and crispy pork slices, parents can enjoy a real taste of China; fish head soup, jelly fish with shredded chicken and vegetarian dishes such as fried bean curd and vegetable hot pot. Adult set menus start at £15 a head.

www.happygatheringcardiff.co.uk

8. Kweilin, Edinburgh, Scotland.

Food blogger for *The Guardian* Jonathan Jones, listed Kweilin among his top restaurants in Edinburgh. He says 'While its decor is traditional...Kweilin's food is spectacular. The wafer paper prawns are the best I've ever eaten and the eight treasures duck - a breast of braised duck buried deep in various fish and meats - is an all-time favourite. Monkfish, halibut and lobster all make appearances on the seafood-heavy menu.' Mains start at around £10.80. www.kweilin.net

9. Yuet Ben, Liverpool, north-west England.

Lonely Planet describes the Liverpool city centre eaterie in favourable terms: 'When it comes to the best Chinese food in town, you won't hear too many dissenting voices; Yuet Ben's Beijing cuisine usually comes out tops. The veggie banquet could bring round even the most avid carnivore.' And you can enjoy all this just across from the city's Chinese arch, the entrance of Liverpool's Chinatown. www.yuetben.co.uk



The entrance to Liverpool's Chinatown, as seen from the window of Yuet Ben

10. The Landmark, Newcastle, north-east England.

Newcastle's Chinatown, while smaller than some of its more southerly counterparts, nevertheless boasts some great Chinese restaurants, one of which is the Landmark, scoring high ratings on Trip Advisor. Five banquets are available, ranging from the Emperor's Palace banquet to the vegetarian Jade Pagoda banquet. Banquets range in price from £18.80-£43 per person. www.landmarkoriental.co.uk

Italian

It could be said that Italian cuisine has been tempting palates in Britain since the Roman invasion more than 2,000 years ago; it's certainly one of the most popular cuisines. Italian cuisine can be found in virtually every city and town in Britain, whether it's traditional pizza and pasta fare in the popular high-street Italian restaurant chains, such as Pizza Express, Strada or Zizzi's, or in exclusive eateries and one-off restaurants renowned for mouth-watering recipes using fresh ingredients and created by top chefs. Old favourites are still holding their reputations alongside regular new openings.

10 Great Italian restaurants

1) Polpo, various locations in London. Funky and fashionable, Polpo is modelled on Venetian bacaro eating, with cicheti - tapas-style plates of snacks - tasty bowls of pasta, aromatic pizzas and intensely flavourful mains. Perfect for sociable dining before the theatre or a night out. Branches in Soho, Covent Garden and Smithfield. www.polpo.co.uk



Snack on Italian food tapas-style at Polpo restaurants

2. Locanda Locatelli, London. A Michelin-starred restaurant run by Giorgio Locatelli, who is passionate about recreating the flavours of Italy in London, and was

inspired by his grandmother's love of cooking - guaranteed authenticity, fine ingredients and a family atmosphere. www.locandalocatelli.com

3. Olive Restaurant & Bar, Manchester, north-west London. Coming out top of recommendations on Trip Advisor for Italian restaurants in Manchester, guests can enjoy authentic Italian dishes from the chargrill and brick-fired oven. Located in the city centre, its range of menus (set, children's and pre-theatre) means it caters for everyone. It also has a branch in Liverpool. www.oliverestaurants.uk.com

4. Italian Caffè, Glasgow, Scotland. A great buzz, tapas-style lunch menus and rave reviews from visitors. It's an Enoteca - or wine bar - so great for anyone wanting to drink Italian, as well as eat. www.theitaliancaffè.co.uk

5. Da Piero, Irby near Liverpool, north-west England. Featuring in the *Michelin Guide* and the Good Food Guide for five consecutive years, plus a 2014 entry into Hardens Guide, means chef Piero, who hails from Sicily, is doing something right. Marinated beef Sicilian style and swordfish with salmoriglio (a Sicilian sauce) are just a taste of the authentic dishes you'll find on the menu, all an easy bus ride from Liverpool city centre. www.dapiero.co.uk

6. Mamma Mia Jericho, Oxford, south-central England. Hugely popular with customers on Trip Advisor, voting it into the top 20 restaurants in the university city, accolades include 'best pizza...in England, only bettered in Italy'. Authentic, hearty Italian fare features on the menu and the freshly made pizzas use imported Neopolitan flour. www.mammamiapizzeria.co.uk

7. Lardo, East London. Located in a fashionable neighbourhood, with young hip staff and a trendy atmosphere. The menu is nicely brief, with a few choice Italian cocktails, delicious pizzas and small plates presenting tasty Italian charcuterie. www.lardo.co.uk

8. San Carlo, Birmingham, central England. The first of the San Carlo restaurants (there are now six; also in Bristol, Leicester, Manchester, Liverpool and Leeds) the Birmingham eaterie in the heart of city ensures diners are spoilt for choice; it boasts an extensive menu of 140 dishes. www.sancarolo.co.uk/birmingham

9. Venetia, Abersoch, north Wales (Lon Sarn Bach) Named as one of the best Italian restaurants in Britain by *Delicious* magazine, chef/proprietor Marco Filippi puts its north Wales coastal location to good use, featuring local Aberdaron crab and locally caught sea bass on his menu of traditional Italian cuisine. Set in a Victorian villa, Venetia may be a four-hour drive from the Welsh capital of Cardiff, but it also offers five stylish rooms to stay in. www.venetiawales.com



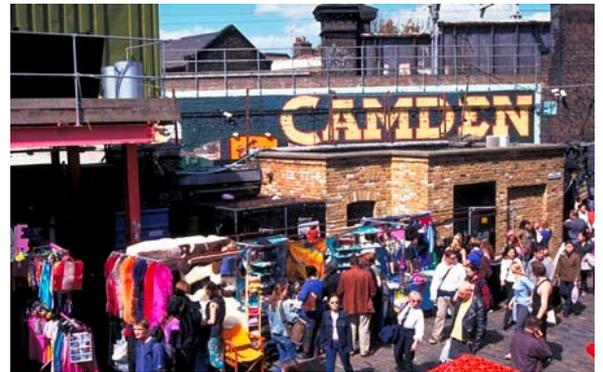
Stay in one of Venetia's five elegant rooms after dining at its Italian restaurant. Credit Martin Turtle

10. Ristorante Il Piccolo Mondo, Cambridge, east England. Rated 'excellent' by Trip Advisor reviewers, Il Piccolo Mondo - located a few miles outside of Cambridge city centre - serves time-honoured Italian cuisine in a stylish setting. www.ristoranteilpiccolomondo.co.uk

A taste of Britain's street food

Britain's street food scene is pulsating with quality, quantity and variety, whether inspired by international cuisine or celebrating local produce. From beach shacks in Wales to Mumbai street snacks on London's South Bank, we travel around the country to see what's cooking.

London has arguably the best selection of street feasts, offering tempting tastes from around the world - a reflection on the city's buzzing dining scene and multi-ethnic population. Explore **Camden Market** during the weekends to see and smell the waft of food emerging from woks, pots and griddles. The stalls change, but on any given Sunday you're likely to see innovative treats such as chocolate bacon rashers to stuffed Lebanese flatbreads and healthy, hot Vietnamese curries. Street food and markets seem to go hand in hand, such as the **Real Food Market**, behind London's Southbank Centre; it's a weekend gathering of artisan food stalls with worldwide cuisine, including authentic Indian street food specialists Horn OK Please serving up bhel puri and moong dal dosa. www.camdenlockmarket.com, www.realfoodfestival.co.uk/market



Buzzing Camden market will furnish you with delicious street food from every corner of the world

As an island, fresh seafood is never far away. The town of **Whitstable**, on Kent's coast - around 70 miles east of London - is famed for its oysters, a delicacy thought to date back to Roman times. The local oyster season is between October to April, although during summer you can still enjoy little pots of the seafood treat (not local) along the beach. In fact during its famous festival in July you can hardly move for oyster stalls. On an equally fishy note, jellied eels have long been a traditional working-class snack in the south-east of England, especially in London and coastal towns. This inexpensive seafood would be chopped and boiled in a spicy broth, solidifying into a jelly once cooled. Try it with vinegar - you'll find it on **Southend** and **Leigh on Sea** beaches in Essex (around an hour's drive from London), usually sold out of a hatch in a kiosk. <http://whitstableoysterfestival.co.uk>



Whitstable oysters are a treat - feast on them for a whole week during the Oyster Festival

Although the origins of fish and chips are widely debated, most will agree that served hot out of a paper cone with salt, malt vinegar and a dollop of mushy peas is a truly British feast. There are fish and chip shops in all styles throughout the land, from the award-winning Pit-Stop Fast Food & Bistro in **Kilkeel**, Co. Down in Northern Ireland, to Quayside takeaway in **Whitby**. Or, if you want to try the dish with a twist, head to Trinity Kitchen in **Leeds**, 300km north of London, where the pop-up stall Fish& conjures up delights such as masala-marinated fish www.pitstopfastfood.com; <http://quaysidewhitby.co.uk>, www.fishand.co.uk

Some street food is localised, for example black pudding in the north-west English county of Lancashire (close to Manchester). This sausage, made from pork blood and oatmeal, is used traditionally as part of a full English breakfast, fried in thick slices. In **Bury Market**, ten miles north of Manchester, two specialist stalls sell their own recipe of black pudding -

including a vegetarian version - which you can also buy hot off the frying pan with a dash of English mustard. www.burymarket.com

Another renowned traditional street food is the Cornish pasty, with roots as far back at the 13th century. The hearty D-shaped pie with thick pastry, crimped at the top, is filled with meat, potatoes and onions, and eaten by hand, traditionally a nutritious, cheap meal for workers in the local mines and farms. Today's Cornish pasties have taken the concept a step further, with fillings such as cod in parsley sauce - even blackberries and apple. You can find these at takeaway stalls at festivals, markets and high streets around the country.

At the opposite end of Britain, Scotland celebrates its Arbroath smokies (a small smoked fish, similar to haddock), which can be found and enjoyed in many farmers markets in **Tayside** and **Fife**, on the east coast. It's hard to get them much fresher - the fish is smoked in front of your very eyes at the stall, so you can take them away and eat them fresh. In Edinburgh each Sunday, **Stockbridge Market** has a tempting array of food stalls run by local people, where you can taste fresh local produce. In Glasgow, there's a taste of India in

Glasgow with authentic street food at **Babu Kitchen**, a chai and roti shop selling street snacks at lunchtime. www.babu-kitchen.com

From traditional to gourmet, the picturesque **Cotswolds** in the west of England has stepped street food up a few gears, thanks to enterprising chefs. If you're in **Gloucestershire**, look out for local chef Rob Rees' **Little Green Wiggly Machine**; in addition to being part of a local charitable foundation, it serves up hearty, healthy dishes from its van such as creamy korma curries and warming fish pie.

www.thewigglyworm.org.uk



A social enterprise dealing in delicious and healthy street food - the Little Green Wiggly Machine travels around Gloucestershire

Wales is also getting a real name on the national street food. Each Sunday, opposite **Cardiff's** famous

Millennium Stadium, **Riverside Farmer's Market** shows off the best local produce that you can sample. On west Wales' shores, summertime sees the driftwood beach shack, **Café Mor**, also known as the **Pembrokeshire Beach Food Company**, serve up foraged seashore ingredients with fresh local seafood. Their Pembrokeshire crab, sweet chilli sauce, sweet corn and spring onion wrap is a deserved award-winning sandwich. Look out for them at major British festivals throughout the year. www.cafemor.co.uk

Street food of the world – but in a restaurant

From Indian dhosas to Mexican burritos, street food remains a foodie craze in Britain; cheap, quick and wonderfully authentic.

1. Wahaca, Covent Garden, London

The restaurant at the vanguard of the current street-food trend, Wahaca, specialises in small plates of Mexican cuisine; spicy chicken tostadas, soft mini-tacos filled with slow-cooked pork or smoky chicken with chipotle sauce, toasted quesadillas oozing cheese or spicy marinated meat. There are 11 branches in London's West End, plus one that has recently launched in Wimbledon, south-west London, but none take reservations so be prepared to queue. www.wahaca.co.uk

***Getting there:** There are 11 branches of Wahaca, including in Covent Garden (nearest tube Covent Garden), Charlotte St (nearest tube Goodge St), Soho (nearest tube Oxford Circus/Tottenham Ct Road) and the newest one in Wimbledon (nearest tube Wimbledon on the District Line).*

2. Dhabba, Glasgow, Scotland

In northern India, 'dhabbas' are roadside diners that serve up quick, simple food to hungry travellers – giving a real taste of Indian street food. Dhabba is a bright, airy space in the heart of Scotland's second city that offers everything from 'thalis' – a complete meal on a plate with curries, rice, dahl and roti – to tandoori meats cooked in a traditional clay oven, and 'Dum Pukht' – oven cooked, traditional dishes that date back to the 18th century. www.thedhabba.com



Indian food tapas-style at Dhabba, Glasgow

***Getting there:** Glasgow is a one hour drive from Edinburgh, or less than five hours by train from London Euston. Alternatively, take the Caledonian sleeper train, which leaves London every night apart from Saturday. www.scotrail.co.uk*

3. Dabbawal, Newcastle, north-east England

Indian-style tapas, that reproduce traditional street food dishes, are becoming increasingly popular in Britain and Dabbawal brings the concept to Newcastle. It's a fun place, with dishes such as Punjabi Chicken Lollipops, Vada Pao (deep fried potato burger) and Chaats – spicy rice or sweet potato dishes served with yoghurt and tamarind sauce. www.dabbawal.com

***Getting there:** Newcastle, home of the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art and the architecturally-impressive Sage Gallery, is around four hours' drive north of London, or three hours by train from London Kings Cross.*

4. Street Thai, Brighton, south-east England

In the heart of Brighton's historic lanes – a lattice of narrow lanes that house a mix of boutiques, antique shops and quirky one-off stores – Street Thai is a great choice for a mid-shop lunch. Bowls of fragrant soups and spicy stir-fries are on offer alongside rich

curries served with roti. The street theme even extends to the decor, with graffiti-style Thai street scenes on the wall. www.streetthai.co.uk

Getting there: Brighton is just over an hour's drive south of London, or one hour by train from London Victoria or London Bridge.

5. Pho, London

When Pho first opened in 2005, it was London's first Vietnamese street food restaurant. Its spicy 'pho' - a noodle soup that is Vietnam's national dish, fresh 'Goi' (salads) and Pho Xao (zingy stir-fried noodles) proved so popular that there are now nine branches in London, plus venues in Brighton, south-east England, and Leeds, north England. Curry lovers should try the 'cari' - while the menu of starters are great for sharing.

www.phocafe.co.uk

Getting there: There are nine branches of Pho, including at Oxford Circus, Shepherd's Bush, Soho (nearest tube Oxford Circus/Tottenham Court Road) and Clerkenwell (nearest tube Farringdon).

6. Tambo Peruvian Kitchen, Bath, Wiltshire, west England

Possibly the only café in the whole of Britain offering Peruvian street food, Tambo is tucked away among the beautiful Regency architecture of Bath, in the south-west of England. Hot pork sandwiches, empanada pasties filled with beef, chicken or veggies, and 'causa' - a filled mashed potato pie - are all on offer, and can be taken away or eaten on the premises (although there are only two tables). Wash down lunch with Andean fruit juices or strong Peruvian coffee. www.tamboperuviankitchen.co.uk

Getting There: Bath is less than three hours' drive west of London, close to the city of Bristol and around an hour's drive from the Welsh border. Trains from London Paddington take 90 minutes.

7. Street Food Chef, Sheffield, Yorkshire, north England

The vogue for Mexican street food has reached Sheffield, a former industrial city on the north-east side of the Peak District, that has undergone a stylish reinvention in recent years. There are two branches of Street Food Chef, which specialises in classic Mexican dishes such as burritos and tacos, which can be filled with meat of your choice and topped off with salsa picante (a spicy tomato sauce) or creamy guacamole.

www.streetfoodchef.co.uk

Getting There: Sheffield is less than four hours' drive north of London and an hour's drive south of Leeds. Trains from London St Pancras take two hours and 20 minutes.

8. Little Wing Pizzeria, Belfast, Northern Ireland

In Naples, a slice of pizza is the ultimate street food and Little Wing aims to re-create genuine Neapolitan pizzas, which can either be eaten in the restaurant or munched by the slice as you walk through the city. The pizzas are blasted in stone ovens to create the classic thin, crisp base, tomatoes are shipped in from Palma in Italy and there's a good selection of classic Italian sides, such as panzanella - crisp salad with chunks of toasted ciabatta. www.littlewingpizzeria.com

***Getting there:** There are five branches of Little Wing, at Ann Street, Lisburn Road, Bangor, Holywood and Ballyhackamore.*

9. Katiwok, Cardiff, Wales

Cheap, cheerful and a first for Cardiff, Katiwok offers freshly-cooked Asian street food to eat in and takeaway. For a lunch on the run, the Kati Rolls are ideal; wraps filled with Indian-spiced beef or chicken, or veggie options such as spinach and paneer (cheese) or egg and potato. For something more filling there are traditional noodle dishes, and authentic home-made Indian desserts including Kheer - a rice pudding, flavoured with cardamom and saffron. www.katiwok.co.uk

***Getting there:** Katiwok is a short walk from Cathays station, two stops from Cardiff Central.*

10. Kishorn Seafood Bar, Kishorn, Ross-shire, Scotland

The west coast of Scotland is famous for its seafood, and Kishorn Seafood bar, on the shore of Lake Kishorn opposite the Isle of Skye, is a great place to dine on Britain's original street food - oysters. Until the 1920s, oysters were cheap and commonplace, but overfishing caused them to become a luxury foodstuff. Alongside oysters, this simple beach shack serves spectacular seafood platters with scallops, crab, prawn and lobster. On a sunny day, eat outside to make the most of the wonderful views.

www.kishornseafoodbar.co.uk

***Getting there:** Kishorn is difficult to reach by public transport, and is around 90 minutes' drive west of Inverness. If travelling to the island of Skye, Kishorn makes a great stop for lunch.*

Peruvian - a new trend for London

Latin food is very much in fashion in London at the moment, with Peruvian food - specifically 'ceviche' (fish cured in lime juice) - particularly popular. Three Latin restaurants to know about (and where you can taste ceviche).

Ceviche - Peruvian Kitchen and Pisco bar in Soho. (Also offers masterclasses in cooking and cocktail making). <http://cevicheuk.com>

La Bodega Negra - Mexican Street food in Soho, where ceviche is alongside quesadillas and burgers on the menu. <http://labodeganegra.com>

Lima - Representing the gastronomic expansion that has taken place in Peru during the last few years, showcasing Lima in London - the first Peruvian restaurant in Europe to be awarded a Michelin star. [www.limalondon.com](http://limalondon.com)

Andina - Its all-day menu is packed with healthy food and drinks inspired by the Peruvian Andes; from 08.00 its Juice Bar serves its own-blend Peruvian coffee and superfood smoothies, while come lunch and dinner the menu is about sharing plates and classic Peruvian street food. <http://andinalondon.com/home>

Coming soon: The team behind Lima will open a second site on Garrick Street, Covent Garden, in July 2014. The new restaurant, LIMA Floral, will introduce new flavours, integrating both traditional and contemporary Peruvian cuisine. LIMA Floral will be split in

two spaces: the main restaurant and a 'piqueos bar' (essentially a bar serving tapas dishes which is very traditional in Peru).

Food fusions

The multicultural melting pot that is London means the capital is a great place try out the latest food trends hitting its vibrant restaurant scene. Still hot is Latin American-Japanese fusion, with some great restaurants in the city.

Sushisamba



Spectacular views of London enhance the culinary experience at Sushisamba

Whizz up to the 38th and 39th floors of the City of London's Heron Tower and check out the unique blend of Japanese, Brazilian and Peruvian cuisine at Sushisamba.

The eclectic menu incorporates dishes such as Sashimi seviche, robata - fresh ingredients prepared over a traditional Japanese charcoal grill and served as Peruvian skewers - and samba rolls, all of which are enhanced by the panoramic views over the city the restaurant affords. www.sushisamba.com

Chotto Matte

The restaurateur behind Nobu London and the Ping Pong dim sum chain, Kurt Zdesar, opened a Japanese Nikkei-Peruvian restaurant in London's Soho at the end of last year. Split over three floors, the venue houses a lounge, sushi bar, robata grill and a 180-cover restaurant, all to the backdrop of a collection of contemporary Tokyo-inspired art and furnishings made of natural materials. Tuck into the Nikkei or Anticucheria barbecues, or delicious hot and cold appetisers such as Tostaditas - tuna sashimi, corn crisp, jalapeno, coriander and wasabi, or warm venison tataki, smoked aji panca, pear and passionfruit salsa. www.chotto-matte.com

Elsewhere in Britain, fusion cuisine continues to evolve with some mouth-watering flavours being brought to a plate near you.

Australasian-European fusion - Manchester, north-west England

Today's Australian cuisine is a combination of influences from south-east Asia, Indonesia and Japan, as well as traditions from European cuisine; this winning union of flavours can be found at Australasia restaurant, in the Spinningfields area of Manchester, a two-minute walk from the city centre. www.australasia.uk.com

Pan-Asian fusion - Nottingham, central England

In the heart of Nottingham city centre, pan-Asian restaurant Chino Latino, serves food made to share. Its signature dish is black cod with spicy miso while its tasting menu offers small plates such as pork, crab, glass noodle samosas and main dishes of grilled sword fish avocado, crayfish & chilli salad with Japanese vinaigrette. www.chinolatinou.eu/nottingham

In praise of produce - quirky festivals devoted to one ingredient

There are plenty of ways to celebrate your favourite item of food in Britain, with quirky festivals devoted to one particular product abundant throughout the year. These eccentric events usually involve music and al fresco entertainment, not to mention more food beyond the brief given in the festival's name! At Asparafest, for example, you can even try Asparasausages! Read on to find out where to go to celebrate your favourite ingredient.

Rye Bay Scallop Week (February)

The scallops in Rye are mouthwatering, so if you like seafood head down to the Sussex town where there's always a festive atmosphere as local chefs show off their local star, with all the restaurants involved showcasing inventive scallop dishes, with cookery schools to take part in and live music to entertain eaters.

<http://scallop.org.uk>



The London Coffee Festival is the place to go for a caffeine - and culture - hit

London Coffee Festival (April)

Bean-fanatics rejoice! For four days, the Old Truman Brewery in trendy east London runs on caffeine, as London's bustling coffee scene is celebrated by 20,000 people. Yes - you can sample some excellent coffee, but it's more than that - in the past there have been 'latte art' competitions, coffee maker-made cocktails, DJs and live music and a poetry café.

www.londoncoffeefestival.com

English Wine Week (May / June)

English and Welsh wines have been garnering hearty approval from wine experts all over the world of late, so if you like wine you should soak up some of the events taking place around England every May/June as part of a week-long celebration. If you're new to English wine, it's a good time to give it a try, and if you're a convert it's the chance to indulge. Activities include vineyard visits, plenty of tastings and food-pairing sessions, plus chances to meet the producers of English wine.

www.englishwineweek.co.uk

Asparafest, Worcestershire (end May/early June)

Britain is very proud of its delicious asparagus, so why not throw a party for the vegetable? This weekend festival in Worcestershire, in the West Midlands region of England, puts on live music, dancing and even crowns an 'Asparagus king and queen' at the event. There are cookery demonstrations and plenty of produce to sample. You can even get an Aspara-martini at the bar! www.asparafest.co.uk

Pembrokeshire Fish Week, Wales (June)

The Pembrokeshire coast is a beautiful place to celebrate summer, and what could be better for fish-lovers than doing so during its annual celebrations of all things delicious from the sea. Chefs come to demonstrate fish and shellfish recipes, there are cookery workshops, you can have a fishing lesson - but if you can't be bothered to sing for your supper, all the local restaurants put on a fantastically fishy feast. There are boat trips, island rambles and snorkel safaris, as well as kayaking and coasteering for the more extreme among you, for eating's not on the menu.

www.pembrokeshirefishweek.co.uk

Whitstable Oyster Festival, Kent, South East England (July)

This annual event involves an oyster eating competition, a street parade, seaside cinema screenings and a Venetian Carnival amongst many other delights and diversions over a whole week. Whitstable is famed for its oysters and its annual celebration is a festive event that will give you a flavour of Britain's fun seaside spirit.

<http://whitstableoysterfestival.co.uk>



You can take part in Oyster Eating Championships at the Whitstable Oyster Festival

Great British Beer Festival, London (August)

Held in Kensington Olympia over two days in August, this is a must for beer lovers. Over 800 cask and bottled real ales, ciders and foreign beers to taste at 'Britain's Biggest Pub', which more than 55,000 visitors are expected to attend in 2014. There is also plenty of food to soak it all up. <http://gbbf.org.uk>

Isle of Wight Garlic Festival, south England (August)

Keep those vampires at bay! The garlic from the Isle of Wight is particularly delicious, so this weekend festival is just the ticket for anyone who is a fan of putting the stinking rose in just about anything. You don't have to love garlic to like the festival though, which is also a celebration in general, with quirky bands, a zoo, classic cars and 'a few wandering celebrities'. www.garlic-festival.co.uk

The Golden Spurtle World Porridge Making Championships, Inverness-shire, north Scotland (October)



Judge who should win the Golden Spurtle at the World Porridge Making Championships in Scotland

Not just a festival, the World Porridge Making Championships are about competition - so if porridge is your thing, head to this event where you're sure to find some of the very best porridge makers around - and since oats are a very Scottish ingredient, you're in the right country to start with. There are many more ways of making up a bowl of porridge than you would ever imagine, so go hungry, eat your fill and place your bets on who will win the 'Golden Spurtle'. www.goldenspurtle.com

Spirit of Speyside Whisky Festival (May)

If you love whisky, you've got to head up to Scotland and have a dram with hundreds of other aficionados at the Spirit of Speyside Whisky Festival in May. Its four days of whisky education, entertainment and, of course, sampling. In 2014 it ran for an entire month called Whisky Month, to combine with Scotland's Year of Homecoming. 2015 should see it return to a four day affair, but see the website for information.

www.spiritofspeyside.com

Hillsborough Oyster Festival (September)

If you really like oysters, you might like to enter the World Oyster Eating Championships or the Miss Oyster Pearl finals. The Hillsborough Oyster Festival has been going for more than 20 years, and its celebration of the humble - and prized - oyster has offered fun for all the family, and quite a spectacle for visitors! <http://hillsboroughoysterfestival.com>

Food and Drink Festival Calendar

Britain is a nation of food lovers and festival lovers. What happens when these two passions meet? Some of the most fun, tasty and interesting weekends of the year. The following is a selection of the hundreds of annual food festivals on offer around Britain.

Foodies Festivals

There are numerous foodies festivals taking place over the summer in locations across Britain: London - Clapham Common (6 - 8 June), Bristol, west England (11 - 13 July), Tatton Park, Cheshire, north-west England (18 - 20 July), Edinburgh (8 - 10 August), London - Battersea Park (15 - 17 August) and Oxford (23 - 25 August). There are numerous tasting and sampling sessions, restaurant tents, cooking for kids' theatre, world food pagodas, produce markets and also entertainment. <http://foodiesfestival.com>

England

English Wine Week (24 May - 1 June)

Taking place around England, this is a celebration of English wines, with vineyard visits, events, plenty of tastings and food-pairing sessions, plus chances to meet the producers of English wine, which is growing in reputation in the wine world. www.englishwineweek.co.uk

Taste of London Festival, London (19 - 22 June)

Fine dining is transported to Regent's Park for four days of summer eating, drinking and entertainment. The city's best restaurants dish up their finest in an unbeatable alfresco gourmet feast, while hundreds of producers provide a bounty of the best food and beverages. www.tastefestivals.com/london

EAT NewcastleGateshead, north-east England (August, date TBC)

One of the country's most exciting and fun food festivals, EAT! celebrates local producers, traders, talent and showcases the very best in north-east food through a diverse programme of events, including live cook-off competitions, lots of multicultural stalls, plus food in 'historic and unusual spaces'. www.eatnewcastlegateshead.com

Great British Beer Festival, London (12 - 16 August)

Held in Kensington Olympia, this is a must for beer lovers. Over 800 cask and bottled real ales, ciders and foreign beers to taste at 'Britain's Biggest Pub'. There is also plenty of food to soak it all up. <http://gbbf.org.uk>

Isle of Wight Garlic Festival, south England (16 - 17 August)

A homage to the stinking rose. Not just garlic, but all sorts of edible delights feature at this undercover festival, along with quirky bands, a zoo, classic cars and 'a few wandering celebrities'. www.garlic-festival.co.uk

Jamie Oliver's Big Feastival, Cotswolds, south-central England (29 - 31 August)

The famous chef not only brings you dozens of affordable and high-quality restaurants around Britain, he's now putting on a party to go with it for the second year running! The Big Feastival takes place in the Cotswolds area of England, a beautiful and quintessentially British part of the countryside, at the farm of former bassist of hit band Blur, Alex James. Pop-up restaurants, family fun and live music make this a food and fun-lovers treat. www.jamieoliver.com/thebigfeastival

Brighton & Hove Food and Drink Festival, south-east England (4 - 14 September)

Now in its 11th year, this is the largest festival of its kind, running for ten days, twice a year (the first festival runs in April). With local producers, growers, restaurants, bars and food retailers firmly at its heart, it's a showcase of the fantastic food, drink and hospitality to be found in the city and the surrounding county of Sussex. It includes the Big Sussex Market, the largest free food event in the south of England, the Live Food Show, supper clubs and gala dinners. www.brightonfoodfestival.com

Ludlow Food Festival, west England (12 - 14 September)

One of the most important in the calendar, the historic little town of Ludlow, near the border of Wales, has been hosting a food festival every year since 1995. It has a strong reputation as one of the best, and remains true to its original spirit of showcasing excellent local produce and suppliers. What you will find is 'an abundance of real food and drink - from rare breeds of meat to real ale, cider and perry, produced and sold by people who really care about what they are doing.' Great atmosphere and a haven for anyone passionate about food. www.foodfestival.co.uk; www.ludlowspringfestival.co.uk (10 - 11 May)

Melton Mowbray Food Festival, central England (4 -5 October)

One of Britain's largest regional food festivals, formerly known as the East Midland Food Festival, is held in Melton Mowbray, the 'Rural Capital of Food', around an hour's drive from Birmingham. Besides locally produced Pork Pies and Stilton Cheese, the festival has more than 200 exhibitors featuring the best the East Midlands has to offer. Demonstrations and children's activities make it a good for both foodies and families. <http://meltonmowbrayfoodfestival.co.uk>

Scotland

The Royal Highland Show, Ingliston, Edinburgh (19 - 22 June)

The Royal Highland Show is a celebration of Scottish farming, food and rural life. Fabulous food and drink are one of the highlights of the show attracting foodies from near and far. More than 100 Scottish food and drink exhibitors will attend alongside gourmet suppliers from across Britain. There are also cookery demonstrations and produce competitions with plenty of opportunities to sample along the way. <http://royalhighlandshow.org/media-centre/news>

The Scottish Real Ale Festival, Edinburgh (10 - 13 July)

The annual celebration of Scottish ale where thousands gather to taste a wide selection of beers from approximately 30 Scottish breweries. www.scottishbeerfestival.org.uk

The Golden Spurtle World Porridge Making Championships, Inverness-shire, north Scotland (October TBC)

A day of family filled activities celebrating Scotland's national dish with porridge enthusiasts competing to become World Porridge Making Champion. www.goldenspurtle.com

Whisky festivals

The Spirit of Speyside Whisky Festival (in 2014 it took place between 1 - 5 May) is four days of whisky fun in Scotland's whisky centre of Speyside; this year also saw World Whisky Day take place on 17 May will see whisky events run all over the world but particularly in its home Scotland. www.spiritofspeyside.com, www.worldwhiskyday.com

Wales

Royal Welsh Show, Builth Wells, Powys, Mid Wales (21 - 24 July)

This popular agricultural show isn't just about cows and combine harvesters, but a showcase of locally produced food and craft stalls, live music and stunt displays. www.rwas.co.uk/royal-welsh-show

Abergavenny Fine Food Festival, south-east Wales (20 - 21 September)

One of the biggest events in Britain's food calendar. *The Observer* said 'Abergavenny is to food as Cannes is to film - an annual festival for spotting rising stars in Britain's artisan food firmament', which gives some idea of the festival's fame. The Festival takes place on five sites in the centre of town hosting more than 200 exhibitors, cookery demonstrations, a children's Food Academy and other entertainment. Alongside this is a programme of individually ticketed masterclasses, tutored tastings, workshops, walks and talks featuring some of the best in the culinary world. www.abergavennyfoodfestival.com

Northern Ireland

Hillsborough Oyster Festival (2 - 7 September)

Fun and entertainment for all the family, now in its 22nd year. The programme is still to be confirmed, but if it's anything like last year's - featuring the World Oyster Eating

Championships, the Miss Oyster Pearl finals, a fashion show, a soap box derby, a golf tournament, a motoring event and a gala ball - it promises to be a fun-packed festival. <http://hillsboroughoysterfestival.com>

Belfast Beer and Cider Festival (13 - 15 November TBC)

CAMRA Northern Ireland (the Campaign for Real Ale) is passionate about good beer and championing the cause to make it more available. The association will be serving up one of the biggest bars in Ireland, selling almost 100 real ales and 20 real ciders and perries. There will be live music alongside other fun and games to provide all-round entertainment. www.belfastbeerfestival.co.uk

Food & Drink Gifts

Food in Britain is a fascinating mix of tradition, history and eccentricity. Many of Britain's most famous food and drink products have been made in the same way - by the same family or business - for generations, and many British products cannot be bought anywhere else in the world.

Food and drink make fantastic and unique gifts to take home, although it is important to be aware of the restrictions on which foodstuffs may be taken out of the country. The Food Standards Agency has all the information you need on what should and should not be taken (www.food.gov.uk).

Few things are more synonymous with Britain than **tea**. Although most of the tea drunk in the UK is imported, there is one tea plantation in Cornwall, in the far south-west of the country. The beautiful Tregothnan Estate has been in the Boscawen family since the 14th century, and is the first place in the UK to grow its own tea. Although the estate is still privately owned, tours of the garden can be booked through the website, with one of the gardeners as your guide. The tea can be bought at the Estate shop stockists around the country, including Fortnum and Mason and Harrods in London and branches of Waitrose supermarket. Tregothnan, just outside the town of Truro, is around five hours' drive from London, or around 4.5 hours by train from London Paddington. In Northern Ireland, pop into S D Bells, the oldest tea importer in Belfast, which started in 1887. Choose from a huge variety of teas, or try before you buy at Leaf & Berry Coffee Shop, (owned by S D Bells and selling all their products) in Knock, a suburb of Belfast just a few minutes from the centre by taxi (<http://tregothnan.co.uk>), (www.sdbellsteacoffee.com).

If tea is your gift of choice, then you'll need **biscuits** to go with it. Scottish shortbread is a wonderful accompaniment to a cup of tea, and at Campbells Bakery in Perthshire, Scotland they have been baking to the same recipe since 1830. Available at gift shops, supermarkets and airports around the country, the classic tartan tins make a great gift - or for something more unusual, opt for the tin designed like an old red telephone box. In the Dorset village of Morcombelake, in south-west England, Moores have been producing their biscuits for over 150 years. The neat red, blue and white tins of 'Dorset Knob' biscuits are the most iconic

flavour, but they also produce delicious chocolate cookies and ginger biscuits, along with many other flavours. The biscuits are sold in shops around the West Country, or you can visit Moores' own shop in Morcombelake, just outside Bridport, around three hours' drive south-west of London (www.campbellsshortbread.co.uk) (<http://moores-biscuits.co.uk>).

For something spicier, take home Sarah Nelson's Grasmere Gingerbread - still made to exactly the same recipe that Sarah first created back in the 1850s. The shop, in the pretty village of Grasmere in the Lake District, North West England, was once Sarah's home and dates back to the mid-17th century. Grasmere is around two hours' drive north-west of Manchester. If you're visiting Wales, the must-buy is Welsh Cakes - buttery, flat cakes dotted with sultanas and raisins. You can get them in bakeries all over Wales, including at Fabulous Welshcakes in Cardiff Bay, who sell exactly what you'd expect - fabulous Welsh Cakes! They use butter from a Caerphilly dairy and all cakes are hand made in small batches - you can watch them being griddled. Try them fresh out of the oven (<http://grasmeregingerbread.co.uk>) (www.fabulouswelshcakes.co.uk/shop).

Some of the most fun gifts to take home are those with a story attached, and for those with a sweet tooth there's no better choice than a traditional **Bakewell Tart** - or, its sister version, the Bakewell 'Pudding.' The almond-flavoured tart was first made by accident, by a cook at the White Horse Inn, who was making a pudding for visiting noblemen. Instead of stirring the egg mixture into the pastry, she poured it on top of a layer of jam, and created an entirely new type of dessert. The Old Bakewell Pudding Shop, in the Peak District town of the same name, sells boxed puddings and tarts, as well as a range of other local traditional produce. Bakewell is around three hours' drive north of London (www.bakewellpuddingshop.co.uk).



Visit the Old Bakewell Pudding Shop and try the Peak District's most famous tart - and pudding

If you're after something savoury, British **cheese** makes a wonderful gift. Stilton - a rich, salty blue cheese - is an EU protected product, meaning it can only be



Take home a pork pie from Melton Mowbray

produced by five dairies in the UK. The cheese can be easily found in supermarkets around the UK, or you can visit one of the dairies - all close to the market town of Melton Mowbray - around two hours' drive north of London. Melton Mowbray is also the home of the iconic **Pork Pie** - a staple of English picnics and summer lunches - pop into Ye Olde Pork Pie Shoppe, where they have been making pies to the same recipe since 1850. In Northern Ireland, the

Fivemiletown Creamery produces wonderfully flavoursome cheeses that can be found in delicatessens and farmers markets around the country (www.stiltoncheese.co.uk) (<http://porkpie.co.uk>) (www.fivemiletown.com).

If a bottle of something is likely to be a more welcome gift, Britain offers a great range of unique **drinks** that can't be found anywhere else in the world. One of the most unusual - and newest, as it was only launched in March - is Welsh seaweed gin, made by the farm distillery Da Mihle in South Wales. The gin is infused with seaweed for three weeks, making it the perfect accompaniment to seafood. Da Mihle gin can be found at the on-site shop in Llandysul, around ninety minutes' drive west of Cardiff, or at farmers markets in Brecon, Aberystwyth and Camarthen, the Riverside Market in Cardiff or Cartwright Bros in London. Other stockists are listed on the website. Whisky lovers can visit a range of distilleries throughout Scotland or mix and match favourite tipples at The Scotch Whisky Experience in Edinburgh. There are over 300 malts to choose from, and the Museum is easy to find, just five minutes' walk from Waverley rail station (www.damhile.co.uk), (www.scotchwhiskyexperience.co.uk).



For truly iconic shopping you can do no better than follow the shopping habits of the Queen. Fortnum and Mason first opened its doors in 1707 and has been the Royal Family's grocer of choice for over two centuries. Beautifully boxed teas, coffees, biscuits and cakes make wonderfully upscale gifts that are uniquely and unmistakably British. Nearest underground is Piccadilly, and there's a new outpost at St Pancras International station (www.fortnumandmason.com).

Buy some 'splendid sweets' or other truly British concoctions from 'The Queen's greengrocer', Fortnum and Mason

An A-Z of iconic British food, drink and dishes

A is for apples

Where: all over Britain, although the apple orchards of Kent - in the south east of England, around an hour from London by train or car - are particularly renowned. Over recent years, there's been increased interest in lesser-known varieties, and they are not just used for eating but also extensively in cooking, especially in pork dishes and puddings (see P below). Both Somerset (south-west England) and Herefordshire (near the Welsh border) are known for turning their apples into delicious cider - you can even follow a cider trail. There is an old saying 'an apple a day keeps the doctor away'.

Why not try an Armagh Bramley apple? As one of Northern Ireland's three EU Geographically Protected Food stuffs, Armagh Bramley apples are prized for their uniqueness in flavour and texture and can only be called an 'Armagh Bramley' apple if they have been produced within the Armagh area and have originated from certain orchards.



Juicy British apples. Credit VisitBritain/Joanna Henderson

A is also for asparagus - English asparagus comes on to the menu of the best restaurants in the spring and is renowned for its fantastic flavour and quality. There is even an asparagus auction and festival in the historic pub The Fleece Inn in Worcestershire, a county in the West Midlands region of England known for its fine fruit and vegetables. The official start of Britain's eight-week asparagus season launches with the Great British Asparagus Run on St George's Day (the patron saint of England) on 23 April at the Fleece Inn. Following the Run, Worcestershire's pubs and restaurants serve asparagus-themed menus and shops sell asparagus products ranging from sausages, jam, ice cream and even soap. Visitors can also take a tour of the local growers on the 'Asparabus' as well as take part in cookery demonstrations and tastings.

www.visitkent.co.uk/things-to-do/food-and-drink/local-produce/produced-in-kent

www.ciderroute.co.uk/site/index.html

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/fleece-inn

www.britishasparagusfestival.org

B is for beer

Where: in every pub across the land! It's also a vital ingredient in the best fish and chips - beer is used to make the batter enclosing the fish. Discover more on a brewery tour at Fuller's in West London, or at Britain's oldest brewery, Shepherd Neame in Kent, south-east England. Microbreweries - small breweries attached to pubs - have also been growing in number. The Great British Beer Festival, run by the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) in London in August, is just the largest of a number of ale festivals held around the country.

B is also for beef

Where: all over the country, particularly in pubs selling 'the Sunday Roast'. In fact, so closely associated is the dish with the UK, that the British are known in France as 'Les Rosbifs!' Many places serve only British beef, which is produced to some of the highest welfare standards in the world, including from Hereford, Aberdeen Angus and Longhorn cattle. Try the only-British beef menus at Zinc restaurant, in the heart of Manchester or the steakhouse Hawksmoor, which has four establishments in London.

www.fullers.co.uk

www.shepherdneame.co.uk

<http://gbbf.org.uk>

www.individualrestaurants.com/zinc

www.thehawksmoor.com

B is also for bara brith

Where: in Wales. Bara means bread and brith means speckled and this delicious teabread, laden with dried fruit, is available in tea-rooms, cake-shops and food markets across Wales.



C is for cheese

Where: there are more than 700 differently named cheeses produced in Britain, including the world-famous cheddar, named after the Cheddar Gorge caves in Somerset, west England; Stilton, with a certification trademark and Protected Designation

Take your pick from more than 700 British-produced cheeses

of Origin status, meaning it can only be made in the central England counties of Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire to a specified recipe; and Caerphilly in Wales. Try it in pubs, restaurants and delicatessens all over the country in dishes such as Welsh rarebit. The annual Cheese Rolling competition in the Cotswolds in south-west England in May treats the product with rather less respect! www.britishcheese.com/facts
www.cheese-rolling.co.uk/the_event.htm

C is also for chocolate: Sir Hans Sloane, a native of County Down, Northern Ireland, invented milk chocolate as we know and love it and reputedly sold his recipe to Cadburys back in the late 18th century. The Hans Sloane Chocolate and Fine Food Festival is held every two years in the village of his birth, Killyleagh, County Down, Northern Ireland, around 30 minutes south of Belfast. www.hanssloane.com

C is also for cider, clotted cream and crab

D is for Devonshire cream teas

Where: Devon: afternoon tea aficionados argue whether Devonshire or Cornish clotted cream - and teas - are the best. Why not try them both out to see? Perhaps in a thatched cottage such as the Primrose Tea Rooms in Lustleigh or the grander Bovey Castle, both on Devon's national park of Dartmoor; the perfect place to walk off the calories after!
www.boveycastle.com

E is for eggs - without at least one egg, it wouldn't be a FULL British breakfast! Yet British eggs are ubiquitous; from being used as an essential ingredient in the classic British tea time treat of a Victorian sponge cake to the picnic favourite of a Scotch egg (hard-boiled, wrapped in sausage meat and breadcrumbs and deep-fried) eggs are the backbone to many a traditional recipe.

Where: all over the country.

www.britisheggweek.com

www.handmadescotcheeggs.co.uk

F is for fish (with or without chips!)

Where: the best place to sample fish is arguably in seaside restaurants and fish and chip shops (see Best Fish and Chips). In Hastings on the south coast, you can tuck into fish just across the road from where the boats of the famous fishing fleet are pulled up on to the beach, while Rick Stein's fish restaurants in Padstow, Cornwall, in south-west of England, have become world-famous. But London has a wide range of great fish restaurants such as celebrity haunts J. Sheekey, and Scott's of Mayfair, while Loch Fyne has good fish restaurants around the country.



Find the freshest fish in Britain. Credit Visit Britain/Rod Edwards

www.lochfyne-restaurants.com, www.rickstein.com, www.j-sheekey.co.uk, www.scotts-restaurant.com

F is also for foraging

Foraging or 'wild food' as it's sometimes called, is part of the growing trend for using sustainable and organic ingredients. Foraging means collecting herbs, plants and vegetables that grow wild around Britain, and using them to cook with. Many cafés, restaurants and hotels now run 'foraging' courses that guests can join, such as the Edinburgh Larder Bistro, which sources seaweed, greens and wild fruit from the city's shoreline, or the Fox Hunter in Abergavenny in south Wales, where you can join a day's foraging walk, and dine on what you have harvested in the evening. And it's not all herbs and vegetables; the Bedruthan Steps Hotel in Cornwall in south-west England, offers oyster foraging excursions on the sandy beaches nearby.

www.edinburghlarder.co.uk

<http://www.thefoxhunter.com>

www.bedruthan.com

G is for gin

Where: Gin is 'having a moment'. After a chequered history in Britain (it caused much social degradation in the 18th century and, for much of the recent past, has been seen as the favoured tippie of grannies) new gin bars and distilleries are springing up all over London and elsewhere in England, and the drink has become fashionable. Welcome to the Gin Craze! Sipsmiths Distillery set up in west London in 2009, while the City of London Distillery, opened in 2012 - after being absent in the City for 200 years! Tour the historic Plymouth Gin distillery, in Devon, south-west England or, later this year, the Bombay Sapphire distillery is due to open in Laverstoke Mill, Hampshire, south-east England - a two-hour drive from London - designed by man of the moment, Thomas Heatherwick (who created the Olympic Cauldron, with the moving petals). The Feathers in Woodstock, near Oxford, can claim to have the most well-stocked gin bar in Britain, with over 160 varieties (you can also stay overnight, which is probably a good idea if you want to try a few of them!) See our gin feature on p80.

www.sipsmith.com

www.cityoflondondistillery.com

www.plymouthgin.com

www.laverstokemill.co.uk

www.feathers.co.uk

G is also for game Venison, pheasant, partridge and grouse feature on London restaurant menus at venues such as celebrity favourite The Ivy and the two Michelin-star eaterie The Ledbury, but is found on menus countrywide. Game is seasonal, however, and is only available during certain times of the year. G is also for **gingerbread** - Grasmere gingerbread is made to a secret recipe, held in the vaults of the local bank in the Lake District village, which is closely associated with William Wordsworth. Buy some at Sarah Nelson's Grasmere Gingerbread shop.

www.the-ivy.co.uk

www.theledbury.com

www.grasmeregingerbread.co.uk



Locally produced, British honey is a great present to take home

H is for honey

Where: taste it all around the country, whether at breakfast or afternoon tea. Buy jars of locally produced honey at National Trust shops, or in exclusive stores such as Fortnum and Mason - who have their own very stylishly designed beehives on the roof! Apparently city bees produce particularly good honey, its taste changing with the seasons, as the plants they visit are unusually varied! Sample Regent's Park honey at the Athenaeum Hotel - which received The Tea Guild's Award for Excellence 2013.

H is also for haggis, the famous Scottish dish, served round the world on Burns Night, and traditionally served with 'neeps and tatties' (turnips and potatoes). Made out of cooked lamb and beef and combined with onions, oatmeal and spices it is then placed into a 'natural casing' and simmered. The most famous manufacturer is Macsween, who also produces a vegetarian haggis.

www.fortnumandmason.com

www.athenaeumhotel.com/food/afternoon-tea

www.macsween.co.uk

I is for Indian

Where: curry vies with fish and chips as Britain's favourite meal and every city and town, even villages, have their Indian restaurants. Its cuisine is so popular there is a high-profile event, the annual British Curry Awards. Gongs from the 2013 awards went to The Viceroy, in Carlisle, Cumbria, in north-west England, and Karma in Whitburn, Scotland, among others. Award-worthy curries can be found throughout Britain; to name just a few, take a look at the great menus at Lasan in Birmingham, Tamarind, in the heart of London's Mayfair and Mughli in Manchester.

www.britishcurryawards.co.uk

www.teamviceroy.co.uk

www.karmawhitburn.co.uk

www.lasan.co.uk

www.tamarindrestaurant.com

www.mughli.com/manchester

J is for Jersey Royals

Where: these are delicious, early new potatoes, grown in the Channel Island of Jersey, where the climate is more temperate than on the British mainland. Best eaten on Jersey, perhaps at the Jersey Food Festival in May, but available in good stores around the country in the spring.

J is also for jam You can't have a traditional British cream tea without jam for the scones or an English breakfast without a range of flavours to spread upon toast. One of the best producers is the Royal warrant holding Wilkins in Tiptree, Essex (east England), which has an incredible range of jams and conserves. You'll find gourmet jams on the shelves of high-end stores such as Fortnum and Mason and Harrods, while Duerr's in Manchester claims to be the oldest family jam-makers in England. www.tiptree.com, www.duerrs.co.uk

K is for kippers

Where: a century or so ago, kippers - smoked herring - were the quintessential British breakfast food but fell out of favour in more recent times. Now they are enjoying a revival, according to supermarkets, as shoppers discover the low price and health benefits of the smoked herring. They are now firmly back on the breakfast menu at many hotels and guesthouses.



Kippers are back on many hotel menus.

L is for lamb

Where: a firm favourite for the Sunday roast, and an alternative to beef, lamb can be enjoyed at pubs across the country, the best meat arguably being salt marsh lamb, from areas such as north Wales, Romney Marsh in Kent, south-east England, and Cumbria in north-west England where the sheep wander on the marshy land by the seashore.

L is also for lobster currently having a starring role on the menu of one of the trendy limited menu restaurants - the growing Burger and Lobster chain. And also for **leeks**, one of the national symbols of Wales, and a great ingredient for all the best soups.

www.burgerandlobster.com

L is also for laverbread, a type of seaweed that features in Welsh cuisine. Laverbread is often served rolled with fine oatmeal into little cakes and fried into crisp patties with eggs, bacon and cockles for a traditional Welsh breakfast.

M is for mint

Where: the perfect accompaniment to roast lamb, in the form of a jelly or sauce. Also essential for a proper Pimms, most famously served at the best summer picnics and at the Wimbledon tennis championships.

M is also for mushrooms and marmalade another essential for the British breakfast (see above under jam).

N is for nettles

Where: wrapped around the distinctive Cornish Yarg cheese, NOT wrapped round your legs on a countryside walk - there is a good reason they are known as 'stinging nettles'!



Find organic food all over Britain

www.lynherdairies.co.uk/cornish-yarg

O is for organic

Where: Organic food is produced using environmentally and animal-friendly farming methods and you can find it all over the country: at Daylesford Organic in London and the Cotswolds; at the Duke of Cambridge pub in north London; or the Boat House Hotel in Scotland, where much of the produce comes from its organic kitchen garden.

O is also for oysters particularly from the Kentish coastal resort of Whitstable, south-east England, which has its own festival; and for **oats**, the essential ingredient for porridge!

<http://daylesford.com>

<http://sloeberry.co.uk>

www.boath-house.com/restaurant

www.soilassociation.org

www.whitstableoysterfestival.com

P is for puddings

Where: puddings, or desserts, feature on every restaurant menu, including traditional British dishes such as apple crumble, sticky toffee pudding or rice pudding. Pudding fanatics should head to the Cotswolds for The Pudding Club in the Three Ways House Hotel - dedicated to the preservation of the pudding, you can even stay in pudding-themed rooms!

P is also for pies and pasties and Pimms, the famous summer drink for picnics and Wimbledon!

www.puddingclub.com



*Traditional summer pudding is a favourite.
Credit The Pudding Club*

Q is for quails, and quails' eggs

Where: the eggs of the smallest European game bird, the diminutive quail, are about the size of a very large olive, with an attractive brown-speckled shell, and have a higher proportion of yolk to white compared to a hen's egg, and a slightly stronger flavour, but can be treated in much the same way. Soft-boiled quails' eggs are a popular canapé or starter.

R is for rhubarb

Where: Yorkshire boasts a 'Rhubarb Triangle', a small area of land near Wakefield in west Yorkshire, famous for producing early forced rhubarb. It has now become a Protected Designation of Origin. An essential ingredient in one of the most popular of British puddings, rhubarb crumble.

S is for scones

Where: filled with jam and clotted cream, they can be enjoyed in tea rooms and hotel lounges everywhere, as part of the traditional afternoon tea. For the best tea places check out the Tea Guild's website.

S is also for shellfish, sausages (used in the popular pub dish 'bangers and mash') and strawberries, without which Wimbledon wouldn't be Wimbledon! Why not pick your own - there are plenty of farms that operate a 'pick your own' policy. The strawberry season kicks off in the summer.

www.tea.co.uk, www.pickyourownfarms.org.uk



Thick clotted cream and fruity jam are perfect spread on fresh scones. Credit VisitBritain/David Clapp

T is for tea:

Where: everywhere, in homes, cafés, restaurants and street stalls. Without tea, the British wouldn't be British. In fact 66% of the British population drinks tea every day, making a total of 165 million cups daily or 60.2 billion per year. And 80% of office workers now claim they find out more about what's going on at work over a cup of tea than in any other way! Tea is now also produced in Britain, at the Tregothnan estate in Cornwall. More facts and figures on the Tea Guild website.

www.tregothnan.co.uk
www.tea.co.uk/about-tea

U is for Undiscovered Gems

Where: off-the-beaten track, down side roads - but even in the middle of a city - there are many great restaurants, pubs and delicatessens that are hidden gems. How do you find them? There are some excellent guides around, including the *Good Food Guide*, the *Good Pub Guide* (which gives a special symbol to the pubs with the best food, and best put in each county for food; and online guides. In London, www.londonpopups.com is a good guide to pop-up (short-term) restaurants.

www.londonpopups.com

V is for Vegetarian

Where: there are a number of vegetarian restaurants across Britain - but 'veggies' won't have a problem eating well in non-specialist restaurants. Henderson's in Edinburgh, the Gate in London and Terre a Terre in Brighton are among the top British vegetarian restaurants. Many non-vegetarian restaurants also offer a good choice for non-meat eaters, including Indian and Italian eateries.

www.hendersonsofedinburgh.co.uk
<http://thegaterestaurants.com>
www.terreaterre.co.uk

W is for whisky

Where: in Scotland! Though there is also Welsh Whisky and also English Whisky, distilled in Norfolk. Scotch Whisky is exported and drunk all round the world, but why not see where it is made - more than 40 distilleries are open to the public, on the Scottish mainland and on the islands, while you can follow a Malt Whisky Trail through the Scottish Highlands or the Whisky Coast trail from Islay to Campbeltown, and from Mull to the Isle of Skye.

W is also for wine. English and Welsh wine has been winning a host of top awards, including vineyards such as Ridgeview - a world-beater in terms of its sparkling wine - and Camel Valley in Cornwall, a favourite of top chef Rick Stein. Learn more about the geological and climatic conditions that have boosted the quality and quantity of English and Welsh wine at Denbies, a leading tourist attraction as well as a vineyard in the Surrey Hills, 35 minutes from London by train.



Raise a glass to English and Welsh wines. Credit VisitBritain/Jon Hyand

W is also for Welshcakes, a Welsh teatime treat packed with sultanas, known as 'pice ar y maen' in Welsh, have been popular for generations.

www.welsh-whisky.co.uk

www.englishwhisky.co.uk

www.scotch-whisky.org.uk

www.ridgeview.co.uk

www.camelvalley.com

www.denbies.co.uk

X is for Xmas

Where: in homes across the country, the British tuck into a Christmas (Xmas) dinner of turkey 'with all the trimmings' - roast potatoes, Brussels sprouts, bread sauce, cranberry sauce stuffing and more! Followed, of course, by a pudding.

Y is for Yorkshire pudding

Where: wherever roast beef is on the menu, you are likely to see Yorkshire pudding, made from batter created by mixing flour, milk and eggs. In Yorkshire it is traditionally eaten as a starter before the beef, with onion gravy.

Z is for Zero Tolerance

Where: for those unable to tolerate certain foods, or unwilling to eat them because of principles, Britain is well-prepared. For example, visitors who can only eat gluten-free food can choose from a wide range of dishes at Carluccio's Italian restaurants (it may not be available in all restaurants, so worth checking beforehand). See also O for organic, and V for Vegetarian and also see our feature on restaurants and cafés serving gluten-free food.