

Left to right: a sundae at The Manor; Le Champignon Sauvage's David Everitt-Matthias; his mushroom and walnut; Scotch egg at The Tavern; The Five Alls



Restaurants

This month, we have a 32-course awakening at one of the world's top two stars, savour excellence in London, eat at a Victorian grand dame and enjoy a slice of the country life



The Manor Clapham

The boys behind The Manor manifest everything that is good about the London dining scene right now. After launching The Dairy in Clapham's Old Town in 2013, this is their follow-up but it shows no signs of second-album syndrome. With similar industrial chic interiors – exposed brickwork, brushed wood, mismatched furniture – it's a good-looking, bright and airy restaurant that feels as suited to lunch as it does dinner. Chef Robin Gill's tasting menu comes in at a reasonable £45 and starts in a similar guise whichever time of year you visit, taking you through excellent cured meats that are hung in the cellar. Paired with the homemade sourdough and the restaurant's iconic chicken butter, there are few better starts to a meal in the capital. Chestnut mushrooms, chanterelles and mushroom broth blends textures and temperatures beautifully, served in varying states of cooking. Dish of the day for us was smoked cod, cultured cream and sorrel – a ridiculously generous portion lifted with lemon and sea vegetables. Damson parfait, almond and yoghurt snow is a perfect finish. *MS. 020 7720 4662, themanorclapham.co.uk*

Three for a Cotswolds weekend

Le Champignon Sauvage Cheltenham

Since he opened this fine-dining restaurant in 1987, chef-owner David Everitt-Matthias has never missed a service. It's this dedication, combined with wife Helen's front-of-house expertise, that has earned them two Michelin stars. Situated in sleepy Cheltenham, the restaurant itself feels slightly suburban, however the food is an explosion of creative flavours. One of the earliest adopters of foraging, David uses local foliage to great effect. Lamb with anchovy cream and dandelion salsa is a divine blend of tastes and textures. *MS. 01242 573 449, lechampignonsauvage.co.uk*

The Five Alls Filkins

One of the many things we love about the Cotswolds is that it's full of people who appear to be having a frightfully nice time. Nowhere is this more true than at this sophisticated restaurant with rooms. From the outside it looks like a country pub with honey-coloured walls covered by ivy. Inside, it's a flamboyant celebration of quirky interiors, excellent cooking and local draft beer. The menu reflects chef Sebastian Snow's Italian heritage and dedication to local produce. His pork Milanese with roast potatoes and salty salsa verde had us scraping our plates. *IL. 01367 860 875, thefiveallfilkins.co.uk*

The Tavern Cheltenham

If there's one thing The Lucky Onion group does well (aside from boutique Cotswolds hotels), it's great food. Its first property, trendy local The Tavern has just relaunched with extended hours. The focus remains on a short but solid menu of comfort classics. Go for a burger made with local dry-aged beef – our favourite comes with house sauce, pickles and a side of chilli cheese fries. For the more pious, a beet salad with mozzarella does the job. An ideal place to drop by if you're light in the pocket area after the Cheltenham Festival. *BG. 01242 221 212, theluckyonion.com*

Words by Blossom Green; Imogen Leperer; Mark Sansom
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Left to right: Mugaritz; the Michelin man-shaped dessert; Simpson's classic dining room; one of its traditional starters



Global gourmet

Mugaritz San Sebastián

There are some eating experiences you will never forget. It could be something as simple as grandma's go-to sandwich, the first taste of street food or, as the case may be, 32 courses of challenging Basque cuisine.

Chef Andoni Luis Aduriz is the rightful heir to Ferran Adrià's molecular gastronomy throne. It's a weighty mantle, representing a part of Spain that prides itself as being the world leader in boundary-shattering food.

At first glance the restaurant looks normal: pine plays glass, there's a reception area, tables are spaced as you'd expect for two-star Michelin. Though look a little closer and the mind starts to trip. Where's the cutlery? Why is there a broken plate on the table? Where are the staff? It all hints at the experience to come.

All courses are eaten with bare hands. From the signature 'baguette' (a baked sweet potato that looks, feels and smells like bread) to glazed lamb with salted leaves, chilled crab threads and the two best desserts this writer has tried in toasted soup of oxidised wine (a marshmallow-shaped Michelin Man) and kombucha mother and strawberries, which is so pure it verges on a religious experience. MS. 00 34 943 522 455, mugaritz.com



Timeless classics

Simpson's-in-the-Strand Charing Cross

A favourite of Dickens and Conan-Doyle, this Victorian restaurant is still the toast of London

Despite the constantly shifting sands of time there are a few things about Britain that will always stay the same: peoples' preoccupation with the weather, the changing of the guard and the daily roasts at Simpson's-in-the-Strand.

This dignified restaurant has stood in the same spot since 1828 and much of the interior remains unchanged. Originally a coffee house and chess club known as The Grand Cigar Divan ('Simpson's' was added in 1848), the practice of wheeling joints of meat on silver trolleys to the table was introduced so as not to disrupt the games. The same trolleys are still used to this day, and it's a wonderful bit of restaurant theatre to see the cloches removed with a flourish to reveal juicy hunks of beef and lamb.

The clientele is a mixture of stolid folk who would be prepared to do their patriotic duty at the drop of a hat should they be called upon by queen or country, and American tourists who come to gawp at these relics in their natural habitat. Right on The Strand with The Savoy next door, Simpson's treads a difficult line between being true to itself and veering into a Victorian-themed tourist attraction. However, consistently excellent cooking and a loyal local following ensure it stays safely in the former camp.

The menu makes as few concessions to modern trends as the decor. It consists mostly of beautifully cooked adult versions of the comforting dishes served in boarding schools, with the words baked, boiled or roasted preceding most items.

We're urged by our waiter to have the roast rib of beef, which is aged for 28 days. When we refuse on the grounds we had the same meal the night before, he looks crestfallen, as if he thinks it should be eaten every day. An order of beef Wellington with roast salsify and green peppercorn sauce seems to mollify him a little. When it arrives, the pastry flakes off in golden crisps at the lightest touch of a fork and the meat is deep burgundy in the middle. A fish cake starter decadently lubricated with a soft poached egg and chive butter is pricey at £16 but 189 years of history is never going to come cheap. IL. 020 7836 9112, simpsonsinthestrاند.co.uk