

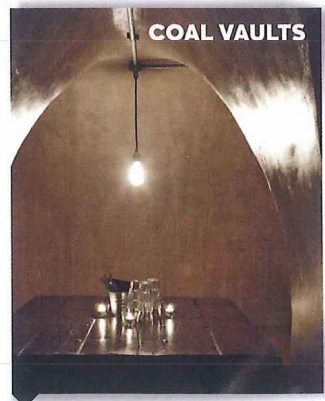
NEW LITTLE SOCIAL

5 Pollen Street, W1S 1NE (little social.co.uk; 020 7870 3730)

This one's a gem: Jason Atherton's wildly popular 'other' restaurant opposite his flagship Pollen Street Social. What's it like? Kind of bistro *du quartier* meets dining car on the Venice Simplon, with some Hi-NRG thrown in. Little Social does oysters, a killer raw Orkney scallop starter, good salads, a great risotto and very juicy steaks. Wine comes in handy 500ml carafes (the Little Social house is particularly good) and the only thing in the garden that isn't totally rosy is the music – loud at lunch, thumping at dinner. If the gang's all together, the alcove at the back feels like your own private party. **£££**



SEE FULL 360° VIEWS OF LITTLE SOCIAL (ABOVE) AND COAL VAULTS (BELOW) AT TATLER.COM



NEW COAL VAULTS

187b Wardour Street, W1F 8ZB (coalvaults.com; 020 7434 1550)

Martyn 'Simo' Simpson and business partner Felix Leuschner have turned this extraordinary 19th-century coal store into one of Soho's edgiest new restaurants. The European-leaning cooking is excellent – mostly small, shared plates, with pulled rabbit and smoked black beans or chargrilled quail possibly the star dishes. Each is accompanied by a cocktail suggestion – chrysanthemum vodka, anyone? – which sounds gimmicky but isn't. There are also five separate vaults for private hire. **£££**

LE PONT DE LA TOUR

36d Shad Thames, SE1 2YE (lepontdelatour.co.uk; 020 7403 8403)

Dear old Pont, although perhaps not so much of the old. Because this Butlers Wharf pioneer, with windows and a gorgeous outside terrace overlooking Tower Bridge, manages to stay constantly young and fresh. The evolved French menu, which nods to the sea, is full of tempting things and the cooking, under Tom Cook, has really improved lately. Service, too, seems more focused. Eat casually in the bar and grill, or dine formally in the bright and airy restaurant. **££££**

LE CAFE ANGLAIS

8 Porchester Gardens, W2 4DB (lecafeanglais.co.uk; 020 7221 1415)

Chef/proprietor Rowley Leigh is a brilliant practitioner of Anglo-French cooking (Mrs Beeton understood it too) – a rich culinary tradition we often forget in the great revival of 'British cooking'. The food in this beautiful and vast art deco restaurant, where Rowley is invariably to be found behind the pass, is heaven: Parmesan custard, veal chop and always oysters. Service can be squeaky, though. The restaurant's phone number, 1415 – an in-joke, we suspect – is hardly likely to promote the entente cordiale. **£££**

LAUNCESTON PLACE

1a Launceston Place, W8 5RL (launcestonplace-restaurant.co.uk; 020 7937 6912)

Two minutes from Gloucester Road, long-established Launceston Place feels very far from the madding crowd. Decorated in rich tobacco and earth tones, it has the air of a private house and in the kitchen chef Tim Allen continues to raise the bar, sourcing great British produce: wonderful game, the freshest vegetables – everything with an eye to the seasons. LP is also now doing cheese and champagne flights – how very Seventies! **££££**

MODERN EUROPEAN

L'ETRANGER

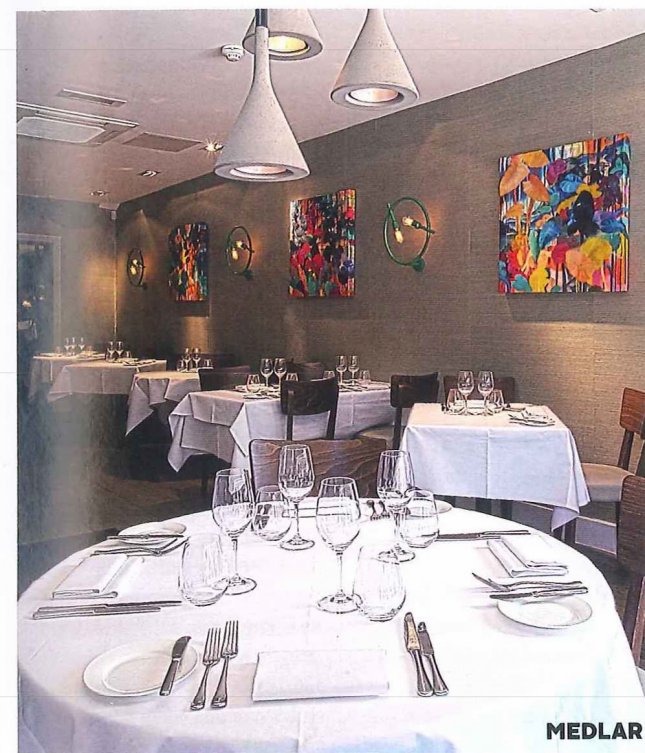
36 Gloucester Road, SW7 4QT (etranger.co.uk; 020 7584 1118)

Tuna tataki with truffle shavings and confit Pyrenean lamb shoulder are two great dishes on the (Asian-influenced) menu at this refined, South Kensington one-off. Mood lighting, an almost private-club atmosphere and the attention to detail of energetic proprietor Ibi Issolah make it extra special. In the 'younger and more spirited' sister restaurant Meursault at l'Etranger, downstairs, they do sashimi, tempura and mini hamburgers plus a whole host of sweet things (including 10 flavours of macaroon, violet, salted caramel and Coca-Cola among them) and the wine list runs to 1,600 bins. **£££/££££**

NEW THE BRACKENBURY

129–131 Brackenbury Road, W6 0BQ (brackenburyrestaurant.co.uk; 020 8741 4928)

The Brackenbury is back, with a broadly Mediterranean menu full of promise. It's a thoughtful revival of the much-loved neighb-fave opened by Adam Robinson in the Nineties, but now under the ownership of Ossie Gray, of the River Café. As far as chef and management go, this pint-sized restaurant has a pedigree longer than both your arms, but on an early visit (and we make allowance for that) we found a few faults with our main courses, though we loved the starters and puds. Watch this space. **£££**



MEDLAR

438 Kings Road, SW10 0LJ (medlarrestaurant.co.uk; 020 7349 1900)

A perfect spot to take the new in-laws (smart but not expensive – shows you know the value of money). This popular Chelsea bistro, whose chef and co-owner Joe Mercer Nairne, won *Tatler's* Young Chef award in 2012, has more than fulfilled its early promise. There's a short and elegant menu and staff are well drilled, but approaches to the table are kept to a minimum – a blessing these days, when it seems like the provenance of even the salt and pepper must be agonisingly explained. **£££**

CLARKE'S

122–124 Kensington Church Street, W8 4BH (sallyclarke.com; 020 7221 9225)

Sally Clarke realised the importance of food provenance while most of today's foragers and food bloggers were still in short trousers. Her restaurant is now in its 30th year, and a recent facelift – subtle and restrained, like all the best lifts – has added a new vitality. The service, too, seems to have been hiked up. The cooking is still first class, pure and unfussy, with all the produce – most of it British, such as Cornish fish, Angus sirloin, Neal's Yard cheese – tasting as if it were picked half an hour before landing on your plate. **££££**

MONTAGU RESTAURANT AT THE CHURCHILL

Hyatt Regency London – The Churchill, 30 Portman Square, W1H 7BH (london.churchill.hyatt.co.uk; 020 7486 5800)

We have a soft spot for this open-all-day hotel-lobby restaurant. It's fresh and inviting, with a lovely view over Portman Square and, no matter the time of day, there's always something on the menu to take your fancy. It does bangers and mash, an excellent afternoon tea and New York/Italian-style Sunday brunch. Service, from a veritable United Nations of staff, is always utterly sweet and accommodating. It says masses about Hyatt. **£££**

NEW OLYMPIC CAFE & DINING ROOM

The Olympic Studios, 117–123 Church Road, SW13 9HL (olympicstudios.co.uk; 020 8912 5161)

Originally opened in 1906 as an early type of cinema, this 'entertainment centre' became a recording studio in the Sixties, and was used by the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and Madonna. It's now been transformed into a cinema once more, with a restaurant added too. Head chef Andreas Engberg, who was formerly at Racine and the Arts Club, does a please-all, all-day menu, from which we particularly enjoyed a well-made quiche Lorraine, a generous olive-rich Greek salad and chicken paillard. A handy addition to the Barnes scene. **££**

KITCHEN W8

11–13 Abingdon Road, W8 6AH (kitchenW8.com; 020 7937 0120)

Phil Howard, of two-Michelin-starred the Square (see page 9), and Rebecca Mascarenhas, of Sonny's in Barnes (see page 34), are the co-owners of this diffusion restaurant in Kensington. It's grown-up, comfortable and well lit, and plays to a slightly older crowd. There's something very comforting about Kitchen W8, where Mark Kempson's delicious cooking can be best described as the Square-lite. Though we've had a couple of service niggles here in the past, right now the ship seems very steady. **£££**

MEWS OF MAYFAIR

10 Lancashire Court, W1S 1EY (mewsofmayfair.com; 020 7518 9388)

We always enjoy lunch or dinner in the comfortable brasserie at Mews, tucked away off Bond Street in Lancashire Court. The menu has a gentle European lilt but with strong British credentials, and the cocktail bar is a great place to know for a pick-me-up (if you're not quite up for Claridge's but want somewhere posher than the pub). We've recently been introduced to Mews's next-door sibling, the Mayfair Pizza Company, which does a great margherita and some good Italian dishes. **£££**

STOP PRESS

It's onwards and upwards (literally) for the unstoppable Jason Atherton, who's about to take over the restaurant on the 24th floor of Tower 42 in the City – his first Square Mile outing. There'll be design by Russell Sage and a broadly Modern European menu.

CHAMPAGNE Laurent-Perrier
Champagne Laurent-Perrier served here

taste
These restaurants will be participating at Taste of London 2014, 18–22 June, Regent's Park, NW1

PRICE KEY
£ UNDER £25
££ £25–£50
£££ £50–£75
££££ £75–£100
£££££ £100+

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