



THE GOOD FOOD GUIDE

BERKSHIRE

2010

The best restaurants in the UK reviewed by



About The Good Food Guide

The Good Food Guide is Britain's longest-running restaurant guide. Since 1951, it has cast a critical eye over cafés, pubs, bistros and restaurants throughout the UK.

Each year the Guide is completely rewritten and compiled from scratch. Our research list is based on the huge volume of feedback that we receive from readers (the list of contributors at the back of the book is testimony to this). This feedback, together with anonymous inspections, ensures that every entry is assessed afresh. We believe that the restaurants included in this Guide are the very best in the UK.

Although much has changed since Raymond Postgate founded *The Good Food Guide*, the ethos of the original book remains: we do not accept any sponsorship, advertising or free meals. It is because of this, and because the Guide will always be the voice of the consumer, not the catering industry, that *The Good Food Guide* remains the UK's most trusted, best-selling and best-loved restaurant bible.

Please send us your recommendations and feedback by visiting
www.which.co.uk/gfgfeedback

You can order a copy of The Good Food Guide 2010 by visiting
www.which.co.uk/gfgbook and find out more about The Good Food Guide iPhone application at **www.thegoodfoodguide.com**

Scoring

We should begin by saying that a score of 1 is actually a significant achievement. We reject many restaurants during the compilation of the Guide. Obviously, there are always subjective aspects to rating systems, but our inspectors are equipped with extensive scoring guidelines, so that restaurant bench-marking around the UK is accurate. We also take into account the reader feedback that we receive for each restaurant, so that any given review is based on several meals.

- 1/10 Capable cooking, with simple food combinations and clear flavours, but some inconsistencies.
- 2/10 Decent cooking, displaying good basic technical skills and interesting combinations and flavours. Occasional inconsistencies.
- 3/10 Good cooking, showing sound technical skills and using quality ingredients.
- 4/10 Dedicated, focused approach to cooking; good classical skills and high-quality ingredients.
- 5/10 Exact cooking techniques and a degree of ambition; showing balance and depth of flavour in dishes, while using quality ingredients.
- 6/10 Exemplary cooking skills, innovative ideas, impeccable ingredients and an element of excitement.
- 7/10 High level of ambition and individuality, attention to the smallest detail, accurate and vibrant dishes.
- 8/10 A kitchen cooking close to or at the top of its game – highly individual, showing faultless technique and impressive artistry in dishes that are perfectly balanced for flavour, combination and texture. There is little room for disappointment here.
- 9/10 This mark is for cooking that has reached a pinnacle of achievement, making it a hugely memorable experience for the diner.
- 10/10 It is extremely rare that a restaurant can achieve perfect dishes on a consistent basis. We have awarded this mark for the second time in two years.

Symbols

Restaurants that may be given main entry status are contacted ahead of publication and asked to provide key information about their opening hours and facilities. They are also invited to participate in the £5 voucher scheme. The symbols on these entries are therefore based on this feedback from restaurants, and are intended for quick, at-a-glance identification.

This year we have changed the criteria for the vegetarian symbol so that the symbol now indicates where more than three vegetarian main courses are available. The wine bottle symbol is an accolade assigned by the Guide's team, based on their judgement of the wine list available.



Accommodation is available.



It is possible to have three courses at the restaurant for less than £30.



There are more than three vegetarian main courses on the menu.



The restaurant is participating in The Good Food Guide 2010 £5 voucher scheme. Vouchers are available in printed editions of the Guide - to buy a copy go to www.which.co.uk/gfgbook



The restaurant has a wine list that our inspector and wine expert have deemed to be exceptional.



The price indicated on each review represents the average price of a three-course dinner, excluding wine.



Bray

The Fat Duck

In a word, genius

1 High Street, Bray, SL6 2AQ

Tel no: (01628) 580333

www.fatduck.co.uk

Modern European | £140

Cooking score: 10



If Leonardo da Vinci was spirited back to us as a chef, he would probably be a bit like Heston Blumenthal – a virtuoso, twenty-first century renaissance man. Since floating the Fat Duck in the early 90s, Bray’s media-wise polymath has dazzled everyone with his talents as a showman and scientist, educator and experimentalist, food historian and grand master of the gastronomic arts. If that sounds a bit intimidating, fear not. The ‘most extraordinary restaurant in Britain’ is an egalitarian, non-reverential kind of place, invested with all the fun, fantasy and wide-eyed wonderment of a child’s imagination.

Kids are positively encouraged, jeans are no problem, and even the stuffed shirts may summon up a smile at an electrifying cavalcade of thrills without spills that may last up to four hours. At first glance, the food can seem like weird science (just look at that ‘amazing palate cleanser’ – nitrogen-poached green tea and lime mousse), but it’s actually an astute amalgam of meticulous research, culinary know-how, daredevil wizardry and whizz-bang surprises. To make things even more interesting, lots of new ideas are coming on stream: the *Heston’s Feasts* TV series is yielding some real crackers, including the zany Mad Hatter’s mock turtle soup and a barnstorming dessert that summons up the sensory ghosts of Christmas past. Like Alice’s adventures, things are seldom what they seem in Duckland. Elsewhere, Blumenthal is happy to plunder his back-catalogue, re-visiting and re-inventing favourite themes and motifs. Snail porridge with Jabugo ham and shaved fennel is a fixture, his scrambled egg and bacon ice cream has entered popular mythology, and the evocatively named ‘Sound

of the Sea' remains a *tour de force*: strap on the iPod provided and listen as the memories of seaside holidays come flooding back. Devotees may notice that an assortment of cured fish has replaced raw shellfish as the centrepiece of this emblematic dish – a positive response to the much-publicised scare that closed the Fat Duck early in 2009. For the record, this was due to the norovirus rather than food poisoning, but it says a great deal about Blumenthal's professionalism that he handled the whole matter with impeccable honesty – and is conducting his own research into the subject. Significantly, this episode has done nothing to dampen customers' ecstatic enthusiasm for the food: some rave about the 'spectacular' oak moss and truffle toast or the salmon poached in liquorice gel with asparagus, little dots of vanilla mayonnaise and Manni olive oil; others drool over the fabulous roast foie gras 'benzaldehyde' – its intense cherry flavours miraculously cutting the silky richness of the offal. And then there are the outrageously cheeky, breakfast-themed desserts. 'Good morning' says the waiter, as you are presented with sweet, crisp parsnip flakes in a bowl of parsnip milk – a giggle-inducing prelude to the nitro-fuelled tableside finale (complete with a mini magic show as your attendant transforms a rose petal into an egg). The wine list is as starry as any in the UK, with impeccable sourcing, gilt-edged vintages and mouthwatering possibilities for discerning drinkers. However, there's hardly a bottle below £30 and even a glass of Sancerre will set you back £12. In truth, the Fat Duck requires serious financial outlay: the carte was dropped in July 2009 and meals now revolve around the tasting menu at £140 a head (and rising) with the additional option of suggested wines (from £90). But, to put things in perspective, the bill for this consummate, once-in-a-lifetime experience could be on a par with a long weekend in a good hotel abroad'. It sounds like a no-brainer – just remember to book two months in advance.

Chef/s: Heston Blumenthal. **Open:** Tue to Sun L 12 to 2, Tue to Sat D 7 to 9.30. **Closed:** Mon, 2 weeks Christmas. **Meals:** Tasting menu L and D £140. **Service:** 12.5%. **Details:** Cards accepted. 40 seats. Air-con. No music. Children allowed.

The Hinds Head

The traditional side of Heston Blumenthal
High Street, Bray, SL6 2AB

Tel no: (01628) 626151
www.hindsheadhotel.co.uk

Gastropub | £28

Cooking score: 4



When Heston Blumenthal bought Bray's village pub it represented a branching out, for the intention was not to extend the Fat Duck's brand of culinary fireworks, but to offer straightforward British cooking that reflected the building's heritage. Little has changed in the late seventeenth-century inn, and while the place is now food-focused it has stayed in touch with its roots and retains local drinkers. Try and bag a table in the pub rather than the restaurant extension, as tables are less crowded and there is more atmosphere. Expect a menu that changes rarely but delivers sound renditions of pea and ham soup or oxtail and kidney pudding, with sides of the famed triple-cooked chips. Seasonal specials ring the changes (free-range ham with asparagus, pheasant eggs and hollandaise sauce). There are snacks of devils on horseback, and treacle tart for pudding. Wines from £15.75.

Chef/s: Heston Blumenthal and Clive Dixon. **Open:** all week L 12 to 2.30, Mon to Sat D 6.30 to 9.30. **Meals:** alc (main courses £14 to £20). **Service:** 12.5%. **Details:** Cards accepted. 90 seats. Air-con. Separate bar. Children allowed.

INDEPENDENT, EXPERT OPINION YOU CAN TRUST

The Good Food Guide is Britain's best-selling restaurant guide. First published in 1951 and written and compiled from scratch every year, it reviews the best establishments in the UK.

All entries are based on reader feedback and inspections are carried out anonymously. Unlike other guides, we do not accept sponsorship, advertising or freebies and we pay for every meal we review.

In this special Berkshire edition, you will find reviews of all the leading restaurants, pubs and cafés plus some new and hidden gems that we think are 'ones to watch'.

Whether you're looking for a great value pub for Sunday lunch with friends or a once-in-a-lifetime blow-out meal, *The Good Food Guide* is bound to have the perfect venue.