



THE GOOD FOOD GUIDE

DURHAM

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.



Durham

Bistro 21

Country crowd-pleaser with eclectic food

Aykley Heads House, Aykley Heads, Durham, DH1 5TS

Tel no: (0191) 3844354

www.bistrotwentyone.co.uk

Modern European | £30

Cooking score: 2

V

The country cousin of Terry Laybourne's Newcastle-based '21' stable, this cleverly converted seventeenth-century farmhouse is a beacon out in the wilds at Aykley Heads. With its vaulted cellar bar, rustic chic vibes and delightful open courtyard it's a reliable Durham crowd-pleaser that delivers eclectic modern food peppered with home-grown ingredients and Mediterranean influences. Smoked haddock with poached egg and bubble and squeak, devilled beef salad, and Bramley apple crumble with custard sauce share the stage with the likes of grilled

aubergines with pesto, roast rump of lamb with tomatoes and olives, and honey pannacotta with mulled wine fruits. Georges Duboeuf house French is £15.40.

Chef/s: Tom Jackson. **Open:** all week L 12 to 2.30 (12.30 to 4 Sun), Mon to Sat D 6.30 to 10.30.

Meals: alc (main courses £15 to £26). Set L and D £15 (2 courses) to £18. Sun L £16. **Service:** 10% (optional). **Details:** Cards accepted. 55 seats. Separate bar. Music. Children allowed. Car parking.

Gourmet Spot

Adventurous menus and capable cooking

The Avenue, Durham, DH1 4DX

Tel no: (0191) 3846655

www.gourmet-spot.co.uk

Modern European | £32

Cooking score: 2

£5 OFF

Ashley Paynton, formerly at the Fisherman's Lodge in Newcastle (see entry Tyne & Wear), is the man tasked with carrying on G-Spot's tradition of adventurous menus in the smart

grey, plum and black restaurant attached to the Farnley Tower Hotel. There is a lot of technical playing around, with multiple flavours jostling for attention, despite simple menu descriptions. Yet it can be good, capable cooking, and the traditional elements, like the treatment of pork belly (served with boudin noir beignets, sage foam and Granny Smith apple) and a chocolate fondant with hazelnut ice cream and honeycomb bonbon, are done well. House wine is £14.70.

Chef/s: Ashley Paynton. **Open:** Tue to Sat D 6.30 to 10. **Closed:** Sun, Mon, 25 and 26 Dec. **Meals:** alc (main courses £15 to £23). Set D £55. **Service:** not inc. **Details:** Cards accepted. 24 seats. 12 seats outside. Separate bar. Wheelchair access. Music. Children allowed. Car parking.

Hutton Magna

The Oak Tree Inn

Discreet dinners and invention

Hutton Magna, DL11 7HH

Tel no: (01833) 627371

Modern British | £32

Cooking score: 2

Alastair and Claire Ross run a tight ship at the Oak Tree, meaning that it's essential to book for dinner. Set in a terrace of cottages, the place has all the homely feel you could wish for in a country pub, but the cooking is several cuts above. A warm salad of crisp pork belly and black pudding dressed in apple, honey and mustard is a well-conceived, popular starter, and meals might go on with sea bream fillets with steamed mussels, celery, leeks and cucumber, or roast best end of lamb with boulangère potatoes and niçoise courgettes. Fine selections of malt whiskies and international bottled beers exercise their own attractions. Wines start at £11.95.

Chef/s: Alastair Ross. **Open:** Tue to Sun D only 6 to 9 (5.30 to 7.30 Sun). **Closed:** Mon, 25 and 26 Dec, 31 Dec, 1 Jan. **Meals:** alc (main courses £18 to £20). **Service:** not inc. **Details:** Cards accepted. 20 seats. Music. Car parking.

Romaldkirk

The Rose and Crown

Lovingly tended, showpiece village inn

Romaldkirk, DL12 9EB

Tel no: (01833) 650213

www.rose-and-crown.co.uk

Modern British | £30

Cooking score: 3

£5
OFF

It's 20 years since Christopher and Alison Davy put their names above the door of this showpiece inn overlooking Romaldkirk village green. During their stewardship they have cared lovingly for the place – and it shows in every detail, from the crackling logs in the old stone fireplace to the relentlessly ticking grandfather clock. The bar is just the spot for a lunch or supper of salmon fishcakes or pork sausage and black pudding with mustard mash. By contrast, dinner in the elegant candlelit restaurant is a more sedate affair, with a four-course menu promising precise dishes such as roast Lunesdale duck breast with fruit compote and port jus or chargrilled calf's liver with sweet onion confit and green peppercorn sauce. North Country cheeses, and desserts including sticky toffee pudding close proceedings. House wine is £15.50.

Chef/s: Christopher Davy and Andrew Lee. **Open:** Sun L 12 to 1.30, all week D 7.30 to 8.45. **Closed:** 23 to 26 Dec. **Meals:** Set D £30 (4 courses). Sun L £17.75. **Service:** not inc. **Details:** Cards accepted. 24 seats. 24 seats outside. Separate bar. No music. No mobile phones. Wheelchair access. Children allowed. Car parking.

Please send us your feedback

To register your opinion about any restaurant listed in the Guide, or a new restaurant that you wish to bring to our attention, please visit the web address at the bottom of the page. Your feedback informs the content of the book and will be used to compile next year's reviews.

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 Durham 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.