



THE GOOD FOOD GUIDE

ESSEX

2010

The best restaurants in the UK reviewed by

which?

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.



Chelmsford

ALSO RECOMMENDED

▲ Barda

30-32 Broomfield Road, Chelmsford, CM1 1SW

Tel no: (01245) 357799

www.barda-restaurant.com

Modern European

This light-toned, wood-floored restaurant is an elegant space that extends on to a decked patio for aperitifs in sunny weather. East Asian influences abound in dishes that span a range from duck tataki with ponzu dip and duck crackling (£8), to sea bass in tom yum broth with shiitake mushrooms, tofu and wakame (£18). Side orders include wasabi mash, and even desserts catch the mood with coconut and lemongrass brûlée (£6). Wines from £13.80. Closed Sat L, Sun D and Mon.

Chigwell

The Bluebell

Mix of old and new

117 High Road, Chigwell, IG7 6QQ

Tel no: (020) 85006282

www.thebluebellrestaurant.co.uk

Modern European | £35

Cooking score: 1

Greg Molen's surprisingly spacious and contemporary 500-year-old cottage restaurant has had yet another change of chef since last year, and indications are that the place could do with a period of stability: service and the modern European dishes have not always impressed this year. Among menu choices could be deep-fried calamari with sweet chilli sauce, a simple chargrilled sirloin steak with green peppercorn sauce or pollack with creamed potatoes, wilted spinach and chive cream sauce, followed by cappuccino crème brûlée. House wine is £15.50. More reports please.

CHIGWELL

Chef/s: James Harris. **Open:** Tue to Fri L 12 to 3.45, Tue to Sat D 6.45 to 1am. Sun L 12 to 6.30. **Closed:** Mon. **Meals:** alc (main courses £18 to £26). Set L £15.95 (2 courses) to £19.95. Set D (and Sun L) £24.95. **Service:** not inc. **Details:** Cards accepted. 95 seats. Air-con. No mobile phones. Children allowed.

Clavering

ALSO RECOMMENDED

▲ The Cricketers

Clavering, CB11 4QT
Tel no: (01799) 550442
www.thecricketers.co.uk
Gastropub

Simple hearty cooking with an Italian twist is as much a draw at this atmospheric English hostelry as the fact that it's run by Jamie Oliver's parents. The regularly changing menu is offered à la carte in the bar at lunch and dinner, but for dinner in the restaurant it is set at £23.50/£29.50 for 2/3 courses. Expect rabbit with gnocchi and wild mushrooms, venison with poached pear and bitter chocolate sauce or free-range chicken with citrus salsa verde. Wines from £12.80. Open all week. Accommodation.

Colchester

The Lemon Tree

Easy-going local favourite
48 St Johns Street, Colchester, CO2 7AD
Tel no: (01206) 767337
www.the-lemon-tree.com
Modern European | £20

Cooking score: 1

£5 OFF  £30 

This comfortable, gently lit, tile-floored restaurant incorporates a bit of the old Roman city wall – and it also offers brasserie-style cooking. Seafood linguine contains crab, king prawns and salmon, as well as pak choi and capers, while tastier cuts of meat form the focal points of dishes such as roasted lamb rump with garlic and herb mash and red wine jus. Parma ham classically dressed with rocket, Parmesan and balsamic might be the curtain-

raiser, and chocoholics should make a beeline for dark chocolate nemesis with white chocolate sauce at the close. House wines are £13.95.

Chef/s: Shaan Pallam. **Open:** Mon to Sat L 12 to 5, D 5 to 10. **Closed:** Sun, bank hols, 25 and 26 Dec. **Meals:** alc (main courses £9 to £15). Set L £12.50 (2 courses) to £16.50. Set D £13.95 (2 courses) to £17.95. **Service:** not inc. **Details:** Cards accepted. 80 seats. 40 seats outside. Air-con. Wheelchair access. Music. Children allowed.

READERS RECOMMEND

The Bake House

Modern European
5 High Street, Colchester, CO7 9BJ
Tel no: (01206) 824569
www.thebakehouserestaurant.co.uk
'Comfortable feel with good friendly service, food is good'

Dedham

The Sun Inn

Ancient inn with Mediterranean soul
High Street, Dedham, CO7 6DF
Tel no: (01206) 323351
www.thesuninndedham.com
Mediterranean | £23
Cooking score: 3

  £30 

It may be deep in Constable country, but this splendidly revitalised fifteenth-century inn is infused with a sunny Mediterranean soul. The interior has a beefy rusticity with its oak floorboards and heavy elm tables – although unfussy pub vibes and real ales contrast with the 'unexpected and understated' contemporary feel of the restaurant. The food is a 'great advert' for home-grown British produce, even though the menu spells out its wares in Italian as well as English. A salad of Dereham duck leg with radicchio and pomegranate might give way to 'piccione ai ceci' (pigeon with chickpeas, spring greens and aged balsamic) or 'stufato' (Gloucester Old Spot stew with Fiano Greco white wine, polenta and rosemary). Walnut tart or

INDEPENDENT, EXPERT OPINION YOU CAN TRUST

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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 Essex 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.