



THE GOOD FOOD GUIDE

HERTFORDSHIRE

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.



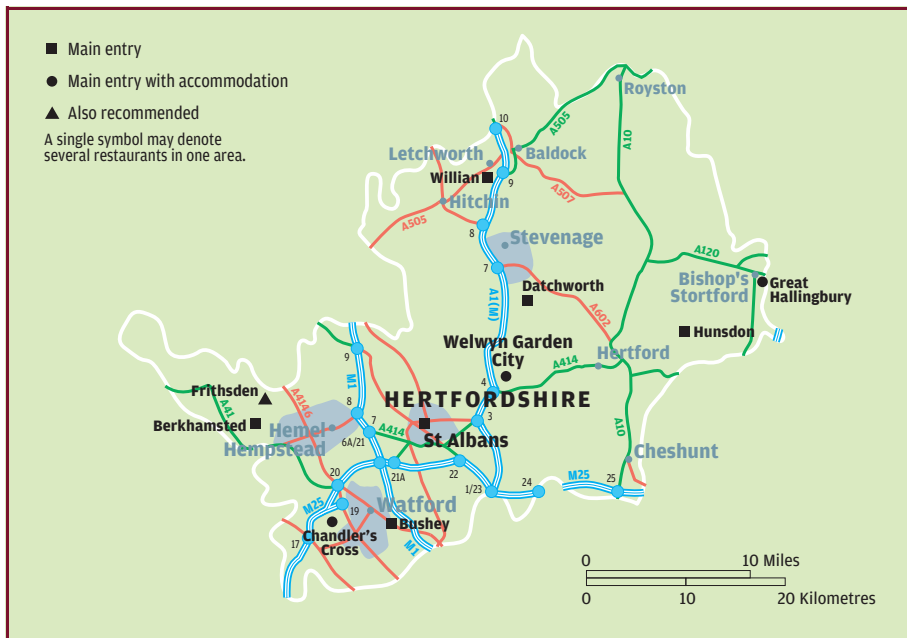
The restaurant is participating in The Good Food Guide 2010 £5 voucher scheme. Vouchers are available in printed editions of the Guide - to buy a copy go to www.which.co.uk/gfgbook



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.



Berkhamsted

Eat Fish

Local favourite with lively seafood

163-165 High Street, Berkhamsted, HP4 3HB

Tel no: (01442) 879988

www.eatfish.co.uk

Seafood | £25

Cooking score: 1

£5 OFF £30

‘They are a great bunch’, enthuses a regular at this popular neighbourhood restaurant, referring not just to the service but also to the unerring freshness of the victuals on offer. The kitchen’s forte is seafood, which gets lively, contemporary treatments, as in starters of crab linguine with green chilli, coriander and lime and mains of whole baked sea bream with smoked paprika sweet potatoes and spring onion salsa. Small/large plate options are offered on many dishes, and meat alternatives include slow-roast pork belly. House wine is £13.

Chef/s: Paul Sim. **Open:** all week L 12 to 3 (12.30 Sun), D 6 to 10 (9 Sun). **Closed:** 25 to 27 Dec.
Meals: alc (main courses £10 to £15). Set L and D £11 (2 courses) to £15. **Service:** not inc.
Details: Cards accepted. 75 seats. 25 seats outside. Air-con. Wheelchair access. Music. Children allowed.

READERS RECOMMEND

The Gatsby

Modern British

Rex Cinema, 97 High Street, Berkhamsted, HP4 2DG

Tel no: (01442) 870403

www.thegatsby.net

‘On-trend brasserie in a fabulously restored Art Deco cinema’

Bushey

St James

Contemporary neighbourhood restaurant

30 High Street, Bushey, WD2 3DN

Tel no: (020) 89502480

www.stjamesrestaurant.co.uk

Modern British | £40

Cooking score: 1

V

This bright, contemporary restaurant stands opposite St James church in the heart of Bushey, and eager reporters testify to its ongoing popularity. The name of the game is to combine good-quality ingredients with uncomplicated cooking to produce a menu with broad appeal. There might be smoked duck with woodland salad and orange vinaigrette, mains of roast saddle of venison with homemade sausage and butternut squash purée or a simple grilled lemon sole. Desserts could take in Toblerone cheesecake. House wine is £13.50.

Chef/s: Calvin Hill. **Open:** all week L 12.30 to 2.30, Mon to Sat D 6.30 to 10. **Closed:** bank hols.

Meals: alc (main courses £13 to £21). Set L £14.95 (2 courses). Set D £16.95 (2 courses). **Service:** 12.5% (optional). **Details:** Cards accepted. 100 seats. 20 seats outside. Air-con. Separate bar. No mobile phones. Wheelchair access. Music. Children allowed. Car parking.

Chandler's Cross

The Grove, Colette's

Out to make an impact

Chandler's Cross, WD3 4TG

Tel no: (01923) 807807

www.thegrove.co.uk

Modern European | £58

Cooking score: 5

T

On a clear night you can see Watford's urban fluorescence glowing in the distance as you stroll around this sprawling hotel complex. Built for the Earls of Clarendon, the Grove's original porticoed mansion now houses its top-end restaurant, and the lofty dining room

still feels like an illustrious 'weekend in the country' destination. Everything here is larger than life, from huge canvases and abstract sculptures to a fantastical chandelier of epic proportions. Chef Russell Bateman arrived in 2009 from the Feathers Hotel, Woodstock (see entry) and he is out to make an impact. A starter of creamy lamb's sweetbreads with deep-fried palourdes and crisp parsnip ribbons is given some peppery bite with tiny nasturtium leaves, while the summery sweetness of steamed Scottish lobster tail is offset by astringent lemon thyme, artichokes and baby fennel. Ideas are complex, ingredients top-drawer and flavours neatly judged, although novelties occasionally fall flat – bland chocolate polenta added nothing to a dish of pigeon breasts with baby beetroot, spring cabbage and 'bubble and squawk' (sic). Finally, the kitchen dons its joker's hat for a startling dessert involving violet mousse, blueberries and Laurent Perrier jelly topped with nuggets of excited popping candy that explode like hyperactive fizz bubbles in the mouth. Busy, name-tagged staff in dapper grey outfits are 'a tad too eager to please', and the wine list includes many exceptional bottles. Prices start at £28.

Chef/s: Russell Bateman. **Open:** Tue to Sat D 7 to 9.30 (and Sun D on bank hols). **Closed:** Sun (except bank hols), Mon. **Meals:** Set D £57.75.

Service: 12.5% (optional). **Details:** Cards accepted. 40 seats. Air-con. Separate bar. Wheelchair access. Music. Children allowed. Car parking.

Datchworth

The Tilbury

Fervent local food crusader

1 Watton Road, Datchworth, SG3 6TB

Tel no: (01438) 815550

www.thetilbury.co.uk

Modern British | £28

Cooking score: 4

£5 OFF **V** £30

TV chef Paul Bloxham is a fervent supporter of 'seasonal and regional British foods', and his latest venture – a sympathetically refurbished village pub not far from Knebworth – flies the

DATCHWORTH

flag with pride and gusto. In a bid to keep food miles to a minimum, most of the kitchen's culinary building blocks come from named suppliers in Hertfordshire and neighbouring counties – anything from Farmer Sharp's steak tartare with potato biscuits to hefty plates of Great Dunmow free-range pig. Daily market menus and specials also tap into the wider network for the likes of Shetland scallops with smoked black pudding, apple sauce and pea purée, Cornish red mullet with octopus bourride and parsley aioli, or slow-cooked Herdwick mutton shank with couscous and green sauce. Desserts conjure up a mix of nursery flavours (apple and blackberry crumble) and contemporary hits (honey and ginger pannacotta with poached forced rhubarb). Carafes of house wine (from £9.95) head the intelligently assembled global wine list.

Chef/s: Paul Bloxham and Ben Crick. **Open:** all week L 12 to 3 (6 Sun), Mon to Sat D 6 to 11. **Meals:** alc (main courses £10 to £23). Set L £13.95 (2 courses) to £17.95. Set D £17.95 (2 courses) to £21.50. Sun L £16.95. **Service:** not inc. **Details:** Cards accepted. 70 seats. 40 seats outside. Separate bar. No mobile phones. Wheelchair access. Music. Children allowed. Car parking.

Fritthsden

ALSO RECOMMENDED

▲ The Alford Arms

Fritthsden, HP1 3DD

Tel no: (01442) 864480

www.alfordarmsfritthsden.co.uk

Gastropub

Enveloped in National Trust woodland, this attractive Victorian pub is a riot of rich colours and old furniture inside, with a little light jazz often playing in the background. A refined style of pub cooking brings on small plates either as snacks or starters – perhaps omelette Arnold Bennett (£5.25) – with more substantial offerings to follow. Crisp-cooked pork belly with onion roly-poly and sticky roast parsnips (£13.50) is one option, grilled sea bass on chargrilled spiced aubergine with baby fennel and chorizo oil (£13.75) another.

Vegetables are charged extra. Desserts include vanilla and gingerbread cheesecake (£5.25). Wines from £12.75. Open all week.

Great Hallingbury

Anton's Restaurant

Relaxed, open-minded flexibility

Great Hallingbury Manor, Tilekiln Green, Great Hallingbury, CM22 7TJ

Tel no: (01279) 506475

www.antonrestaurant.co.uk

Modern British | £28

Cooking score: 4



Vast sums have been lavished on this grandiose mock-Tudor manor, which is now a magnet for celebratory bashes and corporate hospitality. It's also home to chef Anton Edelmann, whose self-named restaurant and 'Champagne Barn' occupies a seductive spot overlooking the hotel's lake and swan sanctuary. Great views, jazz prints and glimpses of the chefs at work create a relaxed feel, and the menus encourage open-minded flexibility. There are starters for sharing (try the signature mini toad-in-the-hole with wild mushrooms) and you are welcome to have just one course from a line-up that embraces combos of Mersea shellfish (scallop on black pudding, spice-crusting razor clams, and gratinated oysters), Szechuan-peppered Telmara duck breast with confit leg, and a trio of Wick Manor pork involving braised cheek, crispy belly and fried trotter with pearl barley, chorizo and sweet potato purée. To conclude, try poached rhubarb with vanilla pannacotta. The carefully assembled wine list kicks off with 16 selections by the glass (from £3.75, £16 a bottle).

Chef/s: Anton Edelmann. **Open:** Sun to Fri L 12 to 3, Mon to Sat D 6.30 to 9.30. **Meals:** alc (main courses £12 to £26). Set L £12.50 (2 courses) to £17.50. Set D £19.50 (2 courses) to £24.50. Sun L £25.50. Tasting menu £42 (5 courses). **Service:** 10% (optional).

Details: Cards accepted. 70 seats. 30 seats outside. Air-con. Separate bar. Wheelchair access. Music. Children allowed. Car parking.



Pubs going back to their roots

Steve Harris has cooked at the **Sportsman** (Kent) for ten years. In that time he has become increasingly influenced by the raw materials available on his doorstep. He labels his style 'haute barnyard', curing hams in the beer cellar, churning his own butter, making his own salt. His premise is simple, follow locally grown food and 'you end up cooking as they did 1,000 years ago.'

As more pub chefs follow his example, it is clear that this is not a gourmet re-invention, but a return to how traditional British food used to be, before industrialisation and factory farming lowered our standards.

Wellington Arms (Hampshire) has added Saddleback pigs to the hens and bees that can be found in their garden and paddock.

The Mulberry Tree (Kent) has installed Middle Whites in the back paddock, and **The Nut Tree Inn** (Oxfordshire) are proud owners of Gloucester Old Spot-Tamworth pigs.

London pubs with no space for livestock, and no farms down the road, have responded with stunning, traditional bar food. Go to the **Princess Victoria** for deep-fried pig's cheek with homemade pork scratchings; **The Sands End** for Welsh rarebit and **The Harwood Arms** for real mince pies and hot Scotch eggs made with pork and venison.

Hemel Hempstead

READERS RECOMMEND

Cochin Cuisine

Indian

61 High Street (Old Town), Hemel Hempstead, HP1 3AF

Tel no: (01442) 233777

www.thecochincuisine.com

'Sun-kissed Kerala cooking comes to the Home Counties'

Hunsdon

Fox & Hounds

Free-spirited gastropub food

2 High Street, Hunsdon, SG12 8NH

Tel no: (01279) 843999

www.foxandhounds-hunsdon.co.uk

Gastropub | £23

Cooking score: 2

£5 OFF  £30

Combining the virtues of born-again local boozer and amenable village eating house, the Fox & Hounds does the business, with real ales on tap, a heated terrace for alfresco meals and lively food with a free-spirited gastropub slant. The daily menu mixes pub favourites with big-city flavours, pitching fishcakes with aioli and braised oxtail against the likes of line-caught sea bass with a warm salad of lentils and pea shoots. Lunch brings a few more homespun offerings (cod roes on toast, mustard-crusted salt beef), while desserts span everything from whisky and blueberry trifle to bitter chocolate tart with espresso ice cream. Around 40 carefully chosen global wines start at £13.25 (£3.35 a glass).

Chef/s: James Rix. **Open:** Tue to Sun L 12 to 3, Tue to Sat D 6.30 to 10. **Closed:** Mon. **Meals:** alc (main courses £10 to £18). Set L £12.50 (2 courses). Set D £13.50 (2 courses). Sun L £19.50 (2 courses) to £23.50. **Service:** 10% (optional). **Details:** Cards accepted. 80 seats. 40 seats outside. Separate bar. Wheelchair access. Music. Children allowed. Car parking.

St Albans

NEW ENTRY

Lussmanns

Relaxed, fuss-free dining

Waxhouse Gate, Off High Street, St Albans, AL3 4EW

Tel no: (01727) 851941

www.lussmanns.com

International | £20

Cooking score: 1



This three-tiered link in the Lussmanns chain (also in Hertford and Bishops Stortford), offers relaxed, fuss-free dining. The menu is keen to promote provenance and seasonality, with starters such as a sourdough bruschetta of bell peppers, local goats' cheese and anchovies, or mains of shepherd's pie with cabbage. To finish you could try sticky toffee pudding. There's nothing groundbreaking here but readers love it and it's pleasing to see a kids' menu offering half portions rather than the joyless gamut of something with chips. House wines are £13.50.

Chef/s: Andrei Lussmann and Tim Hope. **Open:** all week 12 to 10 (10.30 Fri and Sat, 9 Sun). **Closed:** 25 and 26 Dec. **Meals:** alc (main courses £7 to £17). Set L (12 to 5) £11 (2 courses) to £14. **Service:** not inc. **Details:** Cards accepted. 105 seats. Air-con. Wheelchair access. Music. Children allowed.

ALSO RECOMMENDED

▲ Darcys

2 Hatfield Road, St Albans, AL1 3RP

Tel no: (01727) 730777

www.darcysrestaurant.co.uk

Modern European

Situated in an old smithy, behind original wrought-iron gates, Darcy's delights for its welcoming ambience. There are two floors and a courtyard for fine-weather eating. Ruth Hurren mixes her influences productively, offering Moroccan chicken with spiced pumpkin salad (£7), monkfish and salmon wrapped in nori with soy and ginger dressing and jasmine rice, or rack of lamb with fig and

lemon stuffing on parsnip purée with Merlot jus (£16.50). Desserts, such as a sorbet trio, are £5.75. Wines from £13.90. Open all week.

Tring

READERS RECOMMEND

The Green House

Vegetarian

50 High Street, Tring, HP4 5AG

Tel no: (01442) 823993

www.thegreenhousetring.co.uk

'Green-fingered vegetarian restaurant with young-at-heart vibes'

Welwyn

READERS RECOMMEND

The Stable Door

Spanish

12 High Street, Welwyn, AL6 9EQ

Tel no: (01438) 715200

www.thestabledoor-welwyn.co.uk

'Tapas that is fast becoming a local favourite'

The Wellington

Gastropub

1 High Street, Welwyn, AL6 9LZ

Tel no: (01438) 714036

www.wellingtonatwelwyn.co.uk

'Simple, fresh and lovingly prepared food'

Welwyn Garden City

Auberge du Lac

Thrilling food and gorgeous surrounds

Brocket Hall, Welwyn Garden City, AL8 7XG

Tel no: (01707) 368888

www.aubergedulac.co.uk

Modern French | £55

Cooking score: 6



You need to press the button and identify yourself before proceeding through the daunting iron gates that protect the sprawling acres of Brocket Hall Estate. Once inside, the Auberge du Lac (a dreamy-looking converted hunting lodge) beckons. The whole complex

is highly corporate and seriously sporty (golf is king here), but it doesn't feel like that – especially in the relaxed conservatory dining room overlooking the lake. The gorgeous setting positively encourages lingering, and the mood is enhanced by perfectly paced service that never puts a foot wrong. Chef Phil Thompson is on a roll at the moment, delivering precise, 'sharp as a needle' dishes designed to thrill. His food still has a modern French undercurrent but it's not slavishly Gallic, pulling in threads from more exotic climes well as plundering the modern British camp. There are some unusual strokes too: fillets of John Dory are partnered by spinach-stuffed macaroni, chanterelles and split port dressing, while loin of Balmoral venison is invigorated with juniper-infused polenta cake, poached pear and smoked chocolate. Desserts are equally impressive – perhaps vanilla-infused roast fig with sticky toffee pudding and popcorn ice cream. The set lunch (including two glasses of superior wine and extras) has to be one of the best deals in the region, and it has yielded some stellar dishes – notably a 'flavour bomb' of Tamworth pork belly confit on courgette purée with cockles, plumped-up raisins and tendrils of baby watercress woven around it. The regal, 700-bin wine list is a procession of the great and the good from French vineyards, supported by a wealth of eminently drinkable stuff from elsewhere. Prices start at £20.

Chef/s: Phil Thompson. **Open:** Tue to Sat L 12 to 2.30, D 7 to 10. **Closed:** Sun, Mon, 27 Dec to 7 Jan. **Meals:** Set L £29.50. Set D £55. Tasting menu £65. **Service:** 10% (optional). **Details:** Cards accepted. 62 seats. 40 seats outside. Air-con. Separate bar. Wheelchair access. Music. Children allowed. Car parking.

Willian

The Fox

Agreeable gastropub with local food

Willian, SG6 2AE

Tel no: (01462) 480233

www.foxatwillian.co.uk

Gastropub | £25

Cooking score: 2



This agreeable gastropub seems very happy in its own skin. The menu doesn't punch above its weight, nor does the relaxed friendly service, and dishes are full of seasonal, locally sourced ingredients. Oysters straight from the beds beside The Fox's sister eatery, the White Horse (see entry, Brancaster Staithe, Norfolk) kick things off well. Generously sized mains may feature Willian Manor Farm duo of pork fillet and belly or Hertfordshire lamb with Asian chutney, while passion fruit crème brûlée could be a suitable way to round things off. The wine list offers a decent, global spread and house wine is £13.

Chef/s: Harry Kodagoda. **Open:** all week L 12 to 2 (2.45 Sun), Mon to Sat D 6.45 to 9. **Meals:** alc (main courses £9 to £17). **Service:** 10% (optional).

Details: Cards accepted. 65 seats. 16 seats outside. Air-con. Separate bar. No music. No mobile phones. Wheelchair access. Children allowed. Car parking.

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 Hertfordshire 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.