



WINE BAR
28°-50°, London

Britain is in the midst of a wine bar revolution. For years, the concept seemed stuck in the 80s (City suits braying over obvious, big-ticket wines), but now there's a new democratic spirit in play. A younger, more mixed crowd is discovering new and exciting wines in cool, laid-back, relatively affordable spaces.

Xavier Rousset and chef Agnar Sverrisson are in the vanguard of this vinicultural shift. They're best known for their Michelin-starred flagship, Texture, and also run three 28°-50° venues in London. Dubbed 'wine workshops and kitchens' (**olive's** favourite is on Maddox Street), they host tastings and dinners, and employ staff with encyclopaedic wine knowledge, but none of it is forced on you: you can just kick back and relax, spend a little or lot, talk wine or not. Crucially, a wine novice will not feel patronised. 'You can ask questions without being laughed at', says Xavier.

That open attitude, and serving 30 wines by the glass, carafe and bottle (all in pioneering 75ml tasting measures), is helping 28°-50° popularise many previously overlooked wines. Xavier is currently enthusing about Galicia in Spain and its zesty, fresh albariño whites and light mencia reds, while his list takes in wines from Hungary, Greece, and even Devon. 'We take our wine seriously. People trust us,' says Xavier. 'They're very receptive to tasting interesting wines in small measures for £2 to £5.'

Not that 28°-50°'s appeal lies solely in wine. The Marylebone restaurant offers an excellent selection of seafood, and at the other venues, mains as diverse as a fantastic steak sandwich to sea bream with bergamot chive spätzle and lobster emulsion enable you to, as with the wine list, eat at your own pace, and to suit your own pocket. Mains from £12.95. **2850.co.uk**



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Where do you go for a guaranteed good time?
These five places get EVERYTHING right

Words TONY NAYLOR



RESTAURANT WITH ROOMS Russell's, Broadway, Worcestershire

At **olive**, we're very fond of the whole restaurant-with-rooms thing. There's something about eating well and then toddling off to a nearby, comfy bedroom, which feels uniquely indulgent. But, there's much more to Russell's than convenience.

This charming, 400 year-old property is deep in chocolate-box Cotswolds country, in a quintessentially English village, but any quaintness stops at the door. Inside, Russell's looks smart, its staff are slick, and the menu strikes a reassuring balance between crowd-pleasing and contemporary cool. Everything is made in-house predominantly using local ingredients (including pheasant from local shoots and even quince from a neighbour in the village). Chef Neil Clarke's kitchen is as adept at turning out rib-sticking Sunday roasts – say pork loin with black pudding, apple sauce and all the trimmings – as it is edgier dishes such as goat's cheese crème brûlée with figs, candied walnuts and balsamic gel.

For owner Andrew Riley, such constant evolution is common sense. His wine list, for instance, is an unusually interesting read. 'We're always looking for the next big thing,' says Andrew, whose young, enthusiastic staff are key to this process. 'For instance, we've got a very nice Romanian pinot noir on, which one of the kids came up with.' For food and wine of this quality, Russell's offers good value-for-money, too; three courses for £22 Monday-Friday, rooms from £115.

russellofbroadway.co.uk



CAFÉ Hart's Bakery, Bristol

Few aromas are more alluring than baking bread and fresh coffee. That's why, when people walk into Hart's bakery café in Bristol, they smile.

Tucked into a railway arch under Bristol Temple Meads station, Hart's is a keen favourite among commuters and local office workers. Some regulars pop in two or three times a day, such is their love of its glossy breakfast pastries, hot Westcombe cheddar toasties and ham hock or cauliflower cheese pasties. Now two years old, this open-plan industrial unit is still very much a working bakery. It produces up to 300 24 hour-fermented sourdough loaves daily, and there's been no attempt to prettify the place. If you have a fetish for commercial ovens and stainless steel worktops you may find it pretty sexy, but the primary idea was to engage customers in the baking process. 'We eat bread every day,' says owner Laura Hart,

'but a lot of people don't give a thought to how it's made, or by whom. Baking happens at night or out of town. I wanted to open it up so people could be involved in the magic.'

Conversely, for the bakery team, it is a rare treat to be there at lunch and actually see people wolfing down Hart's legendary Portuguese-style custard tarts or its beautiful sausage rolls (generously buttery puff pastry, free-range pork bound with sourdough crumbs). Hart's also serves various daily specials: stews, tagines and bread-based dishes such as panzanella salad or its novel sourdough lasagne. That instant feedback across the counter makes the 5am start worthwhile. 'Baking makes people happy,' says Laura, 'that's why I got into it. You're doing something that people really like, and which is great fun. It's the best job.' Savouries from £2.80, lunches up to £6. hartsbakery.co.uk

PHOTOGRAPHS: MIKE LUSMORE

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PUB The Bridge Tavern, Newcastle

A pub, insists David Stone, should feel like an extension of your living room. 'One of our regulars comes in every day to do his crossword – he's about 65, and he says we cater, "for anything from hipsters to hip replacements"'. That's what a public house should be.'

That welcome is a big part of why The Bridge is the perfect modern city-centre boozier. Located directly beneath the iconic Tyne Bridge, which provides a dramatic canopy for the pub's terrace, The Bridge certainly has trendy details. A gleaming 360-pint brew-kit produces unique craft ales for the pub (from £3.30-a-pint), and some of its wallpaper was designed by the DJ and artist Mr Scruff, who Dave and co-owner Rob Cameron know from their days working in nightclubs. But, at root, The Bridge's appeal is more fundamental than that. 'The vision,' says Dave, 'was to create somewhere we'd

want to stay all day, whether it was Monday or Saturday.' The pub is not just comfortable (décor-wise, think gentleman's club library), but always toasty thanks to an impressive log-burner. 'It's important to see warmth as well as feel it. The fire draws you in,' says Dave.

The Bridge's food is another compelling reason to stay. Working closely with local suppliers (fish from South Shields' day boats, whole carcasses from local estates), chef Tony Renwick produces unusually sharply executed pub dishes, and the mains – such as green peppercorn duck hash, or pulled pork bun with kimchi slaw – rarely break the £10-mark. The 'bar bait' menu is, similarly, a roll call of snacky joy: haggis toastie with soft quail's egg; proper rarebit; pigs' head croquettes with caper mayo. Stay in The Bridge all day? **olive** is tempted to move in. Mains from £8.95. thebridgetavern.com



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FINE DINING Stovell's, Chobham, Surrey

At the very highest level, restaurants are deeply personal projects. They are serene, self-contained worlds, that, in the 360° totality of their vision, offer diners a few precious hours of escapism.

This is very much the case at Stovell's, co-owned by chefs, Fernando and Kristy Stovell, where every detail is an idiosyncratic expression of the couple's tastes and interests. That ranges from the starched linens on the tables (the service is otherwise modern and informal, but, in that one regard, Fernando is a traditionalist), to the Wildcrafted gin that the Stovell's distil on-site, with their supra-talented cocktail barman, Geyan Surendran. 'As a husband-and-wife team,' says Fernando, 'we have to make it a home-from-home, where customers feel very comfortable and the staff are part of that family.'

All those decisions, moreover, have been endlessly deliberated. The Spanish charcuterie served in the bar at this handsomely renovated, wood-beamed Tudor farmhouse, has been fastidiously sourced from tiny artisan producers. 'Cooking is easy,' says Fernando, 'sourcing the right ingredients is the hardest and most important thing.' Likewise, the restaurant menu cherry-picks ideas from numerous countries, and blends them smoothly into something uniquely Stovellian. The duo come from cosmopolitan families (collectively, they're a mix of Mexican, British, Kiwi, Austrian, and Cuban), and that, like their regular food research trips abroad, continues to inspire them. For instance, Fernando's love of northern Spanish hardwood-grilling (don't miss his Anjou quail), an interest in Scandi-style fermenting or, after a recent visit to the USA, a dish of scallops paired with shrimp and grits, pork jowl and grilled Chinese cabbage. 'That's where all our money goes,' says Fernando, of their gastro-jaunts. 'And every time we travel, we come back with fresh ideas.' Dinner from £35. stovells.com



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