

WINE, DINE & RECLINE

Lovers of exceptional food and fine wine can now combine dual pleasures thanks to a host of excellent restaurants with comfy rooms. Carole Hamilton knows where to eat, drink, sleep and repeat



ROCKSALT, FOLKESTONE, KENT

The view from the floor-to-ceiling windows at this harbourside restaurant is nothing short of spectacular – and the food isn't half bad either. Mark Sargeant is Rocksalt's chef and co-owner and, having worked previously as Gordon Ramsay's right-hand man, the quality of everything that leaves the kitchen is no surprise. The menu leans towards local seafood; we started with 'Hot Shells' – prawns, clams, mussels, razor clams with samphire in a velvety shellfish velouté – and potted crayfish tails given just the right amount of heat from a hit of Cayenne pepper. Catches of the day were Dover sole, grilled with a little butter and lemon, and cod with a herb beurre blanc on a pile of samphire.

SO TO BED... Four bolthole bedrooms are found a short stroll along the harbour in a converted Smokehouse, all with sea views, where you'll wake to the chugging of the fishing boats on their way to catch your lunch.

Lunch for two with wine, around £110. Rooms from £85, including a breakfast box. rocksaltfolkestone.co.uk



ECKINGTON MANOR, WILTSHIRE

Fans of *Masterchef*, *The Professionals* will be familiar with 2015 winner Mark Stinchcombe, chef at this picturesque hotel nestled in the Avon valleys. Mark and his wife Sue run the kitchen, and dishes are picture-pretty. Favourites include Eckington Manor beef ribeye with marrow bone crust and charcoal emulsion, and local venison with smoked beetroot and blackberries. The popular on-site cookery school offers a wide range of classes – from dinner parties made easy (£99) to preparing restaurant dishes at home (£175).

SO TO BED... The 17 comfortable bedrooms are spread out over four converted farm buildings, each of them lovingly restored to make the most of their original period features – some of which date back to the 12th century.

A three-course dinner without wine, £48 per person. Double rooms from £149, including breakfast. eckingtonmanor.co.uk



Psst... The hotel is surrounded by 46 acres of forageable grounds and a restored Victorian walled kitchen garden.



FOREST SIDE, GRASMERE

Opened in early 2016, Forest Side earned its first Michelin star within just eight months – little surprise when the kitchen is run by former L'Enclume sous chef and head forager Kevin Tickle. The hotel is beautifully located in the heart of the Lakes, just minutes from Grasmere. Forest Side's exciting, daily-changing menu depends on what's available in the grounds: we enjoyed venison pastrami, smoked juniper yoghurt, swede, Old Winchester cheese and pickled allium flowers, plus West coast scallop, parsnip, duck prosciutto and mead.

SO TO BED... Warm, welcoming bedrooms make the most of local designers and craftspeople, and each one takes its name from a tree or plant from the grounds – think Mulberry, Pine, and Silver Birch.

10-course tasting menu, £70 per person. Dinner, bed and breakfast from £299, based on two sharing. theforestside.com >>



L'ENCLUME, CARTMEL, CUMBRIA

With two Michelin stars and a reputation for showcasing home-grown ingredients from its farm, Simon Rogan's iconic restaurant needs little introduction. Four-times 'best restaurant in the UK', it's set within an old ironmonger's; the dining room's rough walls, bare wooden tables, and lack of music and wifi keeping the focus firmly on the food. First, choose between tasting menus - currently comprising seven or 20-course options - then you get to see a menu. Subtle flavour combinations send tastebuds into overdrive; it's fun not to peek and try to work out what you've just eaten. Of our seven-course lunch, venison with pear and beetroot, and desserts of apricot, cherry and blackcurrants lingered in the memory. **SO TO BED...** The 16 bedrooms are sited in the pretty village of Cartmel, and include dinner at L'Enclume and breakfast at Simon's other restaurant, Rogan & Co.

Seven-course lunch, £55 per person plus £40 for the wine pairing. Double rooms from £250 in a superior room including breakfast. lenclume.co.uk



Psst... For a special treat, book a seat at Aulis at L'Enclume, the experimental kitchen with a chef's table for six, Friday and Saturday evenings only. £150 per person, plus £80 for wines.

RESTAURANT SAT BAINS, NOTTINGHAM

'Marooned in an industrial wasteland' is how one visitor described the location; the chef himself noted it as akin to 'finding a diamond in a turd'. The two-starred Nottingham restaurant's setting isn't picturesque, but who cares when you can enjoy food this good? With a choice of seven or 10-course tasting menus, you'll enjoy an eating experience rather than just a meal. Highlights? Treacle breads, the insanely pretty, infamous *Great British Menu*-winning egg dish, grouse with watercress, nuts and chocolate, lime ice-cream lollipops with fennel, and a strangely-successful chocolate cherry dessert with a dash of tobacco. Enquire about a seat at the 8-seater chef's bench (an extra £10 per person), where you can marvel at the chefs' expertise close-up.

SO TO BED... The six bedrooms are individually designed - with a private patio, room seven is a favourite. Seven-course tasting menu, £85 per person. Double room from £190, including breakfast. restaurantsatbains.com



5 more foodie favourites...



THE RED LION, BLEWBURY, OXFORD

Phil and Arden Wild's cosy hideaway lies at the end of a tree-lined lane in the heart of Oxfordshire, and welcomes diners with excellent cooking and three bedrooms. Locally-sourced produce creates a host of pub classics. Around £90 for two with wine. B&B from £95. theredlionpubandkitchen.co.uk



Psst... The daily three-course set menu is great value at £24. A la carte dinner with wine is around £120 for two people.

YORK & ALBANY, LONDON

This delightful, relaxed townhouse restaurant/hotel near Regents Park is part of the Gordon Ramsay group. From breakfast eggs through to meaty barbecued dinners, there's always something tasty on the menu. Many of the nine cosy bedrooms boast original features. Double room with breakfast, from £215. gordonramsayrestaurants.com

Psst...

The Milk House's new sister pub with rooms, The Barrow House at Egerton, is about 15 minutes drive away - and well worth a visit.



HIPPING HALL, KIRKBY, YORKSHIRE

Once described as 'a rural retreat where a city girl can feel at home', Hipping Hall does country house relaxation with a big dollop of style. The kitchen is run by the talented Oli Martin, and the five renovated rooms in The Old Stables offers a chef's kitchen and dining room. Why not opt for exclusive hire and throw a house party? Five-course dinner plus B&B for two, from £269. hippinghall.com



THE MILK HOUSE, SISSINGHURST, KENT

Being welcomed to this former 16th-century timber framed hall house with a glass of bubbles from the local vineyard is the perfect way to start a weekend. Tuck into a menu based around seasonal produce - fluffy twice-baked Stilton soufflé and mustard pork fillet with sweet potato mash, then retire to one of four contemporary-styled bedrooms. Around £90 for two with wine. B&B from £80. themilkhouse.co.uk



Psst... Wine-lovers will appreciate the impressive 450-bin wine list and the 60 different wines served by the glass.

DOG & BADGER, MEDMENHAM, BUCKS

Just outside Marlow, The Dog & Badger has six new bedrooms, making the prospect of a trip to sample Shaun Rowlands' food all the more tempting. From the open kitchen comes an innovative menu that's strong on vegetarian and gluten-free options; plus delights like sharing platters of oysters, plancha-grilled fish, and meats from the wood-fired oven. Around £110 with wine for two. B&B from £155. thedogandbadger.com



Psst... The Halfway Bridge near Petworth - the sister venue - is also worth a visit, with an excellent restaurant and six rooms in the inn's former stable yard. halfwaybridge.co.uk



CRAB & LOBSTER, WEST SUSSEX

For a spot of escapism, The Crab & Lobster at Sidlesham ticks all the boxes. Sleepy Pagham Harbour is a bird-lover's paradise, and although the surrounding marshland has some lovely walks, the food alone is worth the trip. The kitchen excels at transforming already-fabulous produce into something even better - baked Selsey crab and seared scallops burst with flavour, cod with smoked haddock chowder had us craving seconds, and custard terrine with poached rhubarb was pure comfort. From the well-priced wine list, try a glass of cherry-laden Catalonian Mataro red dessert wine. Breakfast is suitably-relaxed, featuring heavenly poached eggs on homemade muffins.

SO TO BED... The Crab & Lobster has four double bedrooms upstairs, and a self-catering cottage next door. Dinner for two with wine around £95, B&B from £165. crab-lobster.co.uk

