

Tim Russell's 50 plus recommended London restaurants

I have had the opportunity of writing a few restaurant reviews over the years and I am often asked for recommendations in London especially from friends outside town. Anyway, with a natural bias to West London where I live, I thought it might be fun to put a list of my 50 or so of my favourite London restaurants onto my website in case it assists you in choosing a lunch or night out in town. A difficult task in this great city full of wonderful restaurants. Which is why the list creeps towards 60 names.

Anyway, here it is. The restaurants have been set out in alphabetical order and split between the more expensive and the less expensive although I accept many are for special occasions. **Bold** type means it's one of my top 10 and P, means reasonable parking after 6.30pm. Bold type named restaurants within other reviews means they are elsewhere on my list.

There are some fairly recent changes. Departures include Club Gascon (I have not been there for what seems like forever), Langan's Brasserie (tired), The Ivy (not a patch on Le Caprice and well done for the franchises around town but it's not the same), Petrus (expensive and pretentious), Enoteca Turi (moved from Putney), Shanghai Blues (my favourite restaurant in Holborn has closed sadly), San Remo in Barnes (closed after 27 years then reopened but new owners and not the same) and Gaucho (I liked the one on the river at Richmond but the company went into administration sadly) are all out.

Assaggi (reopened in 2007), Clos Maggiore and Koffmans (French to the fore) are now in, in along with the amazing Core (Clare Smyth) and Hide (Easter 2018 opening for Ollie Dabbous) and two locals for me, the excellent Italian L'Amorosa and Saigon Saigon, Vietnamese.

I could not ignore Rules (no pun intended) anymore, so many visitors love it. Cicchetti at Piccadilly Circus has come in because its location and consistency are so good for that pre-theatre Italian. The Terrace and Kitchen in Kensington is recommended after recent visits, as well as nearby Marianne despite the loss of its owner and head chef on "travels". I do some legal work for D& D restaurants - I have added my 3 favourites of those (I have limited myself to 3 for this list to avoid the "appearance" of bias, but see the first entry under Angler for more detail). I have gone for Angler, Launceston Place and The Orrery - tough to choose.

I also act for the wonderful Tamarind Collection of restaurants, but would be recommending the newly refurbished Tamarind of Mayfair anyway because it is just exceptional. And because I often meet clients in /near Victoria I have started to visit and enjoy Rosa's Victoria excellent Thai food. It is an evolving list and fun trying new places as well as old, what a city for food compared to even a decade ago.

All very subjective of course so, as they say, don't blame the juggler if you disagree with any recommendations.

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- 1 Angler - 3 South Place, EC2. Tel 020 3215 1260. My favourite restaurant in the City. Great views, private tables, wonderful service, excellent set lunch and one of my 3 D& D picks. Edges out the wonderful Coq d' Argent near Bank. Another from the D&D stable (they bought the Conran group of restaurants and others in their full of variety chain include Kensington Place in W8, 100 Wardour St in Soho, Quaglino's off Piccadilly, **Launceston Place** in Kensington, Skylon by the National Theatre south of the river, Satoria in Saville Row, Bluebird in Fulham, the German Gymnasium at Kings Cross, **Orrery** in Marylebone, Aster in Victoria and Pont De La Tour plus Chop House by Tower Bridge. So, they have London covered as well as some cities outside the capital. Check out their website for more.

- 2 **Assaggi** – 39 Chepstow Place, W2, tel 020 7792 5501. A difficult (traditional and recently reopened) Italian restaurant to get into in London because it doesn't seat many people. It is very informal but the service is excellent and very friendly and the food is mouth-watering excellent (from my favourite Pecorino starter to the sea bass) in this Notting Hill Italian above what was a pub now also a restaurant. Menu in Italian! Specials always good. Great for lunch and easier to get in then. Their one table for 6 very sought after. I tend to book for the next time when I am there, which works well. P
- 3 **Le Caprice** – Arlington House, Arlington Street, SW1, tel 020 7629 2239. You really need to book well ahead. A lot of famous people seem to go to this restaurant just behind the Ritz Hotel but it is still relaxed and very good for pre and post theatre meals. The cooking is excellent and consistent with an eclectic menu based upon brasserie type food. The standards are very high including service and the same meals are served at the bar as in the main restaurant. I would normally choose the bar (which is much easier to book) if there are only 2 of you. For a price there is a NCP car park by the restaurant for pre "single yellow line" parking. Open for Saturday and Sunday brunch. P
- 4 **Cinnamon Club** – Old Westminster Library, Great Smith Street, tel 020 7222 2555. An interesting location, high prices for Indian food but fun and full of MP's as it's right by Westminster. But if its fabulous Indian food you are after go to **Indian Zing** or **Zaika** if in or near West London and **Tamarind Kitchen** or **Tamarind of Mayfair** if in Central London.
- 5 **Clarke's** – 124 Kensington Church Street, tel 020 7221 9225. Great cooking from Sally Clarke, no longer a fixed no choice menu but sophisticated and fresh food. Try and book upstairs. Great for weekend brunch. Still elegant after all these years. P
- 6 **Clos Maggiore** - 33 King Street, WC2 tel 020 7379 9696. Covent Garden, romantic, great food and service and a massive wine list. What more do you need to say? Other than almost impossible to book other than a 10.30 pm table beloved by all Americans I am sure. Not.
- 7 **Core** – 92 Kensington Park Road, London W11 2PN tel 020 3937 5086. Claire Smyth opened in the summer of 2017 on what was the site of the Notting Hill Brasserie and before that Leiths. Quite a stark room (also with a chef's table outside the kitchen) and very much her own menu but quite superb. One of the best tasting menus I've ever enjoyed (with a wine pairing if you want) and well worth the expense. The crispy smoked duck wing (with burnt orange and spices) as an amuse bouche through to lamb braised carrot (yes, really) is stunning and I was completely sold on her version of cherry bakewell and would thoroughly recommend a visit for any foodie. P
- 8 **E & O** – 14 Blenheim Crescent, W11, tel 020 7229 5454. Good service, unusual food and real buzz. Another hit for Notting Hill. I always really enjoy a meal there and the critics rave as well. P.
- 9 **Le Gavroche** – 43 Upper Brook Street, W1 tel 020 7408 0881. Michael Roux, extremely good food and service on a recent visit but obviously expensive. A London basement version of the Waterside Inn. Very French but much improved from a few years ago and a natural choice if you want to eat centrally and someone else is paying! The tables for two mean you are quite close to your dining partner and tables for four are better. Jackets preferred, set lunch a good deal. P
- 10 **Hakkasan** – 8 Hanway Place, W1, tel:020 7927 7000. Very near to Tottenham Court Road tube though tucked away location. Very atmospheric with a great lounge/bar area. Innovative, oriental food. Good dim sum. Restaurant design the best-selling point though. Also has a sister at 8 Hanway Place W1.

- 11 Hide – 85 Piccadilly, W1J 7NB, tel 020 3146 8666. Ollie Dabbous opened this restaurant in the Easter of 2018 having got a Michelin star within 8 months of opening Dabbous back in 2012. The restaurant is amazing with three levels called Below, Ground and Above and sweeping views of Green Park. The restaurant is open all day (which seems to be the way these days thanks to **The Wolseley** very close to Hide). I recommend the set menu (for less than £100) and featuring 11 courses. If you don't have any commitments it boasts a wonderful epicurean delight.
- 12 Kitchen - 11-13 Abingdon Rd. Tel 020 7937 0120. Phil Howard and quite magical food just off High Street Ken. P
- 13 Koffmans. At the Berkeley Hotel SW1 Tel 020 7235 1010. Pierre Koffman is famous for good reason. Well worth a visit but be ready for old fashioned French. Atmosphere apart it is fantastic and its next door to Marcus Wareing (was Petrus and became Marcus Wareing when Gordon Ramsey took the Petrus name after their fall out and opened in Kinnerton Street and is now simply called Marcus). Mind you I am not a huge fan of either the Petrus restaurant or Marcus despite their talents. Too many bad and expensive experiences mine and others. Anyway, a tick for Koffmans and gets on this list as has the edge on similar old fashioned but excellent French food at Otto's WC1 but only just.
- 14 Launceston Place – 1a Launceston Pl W8 tel 020 7937 6912. Intimate and excellent and away from the hustle and bustle, well worth a trip to this D&D restaurant or to Kensington Place nearby its company sister.
- 15 The Ledbury – 127 Ledbury Road W11, tel 020 7792 9090. A great restaurant in fun Notting Hill, just heavenly food. Chef Brett Graham is very innovative and if you like modern gems here it is. P
- 16 Marianne 104 Chepstow rd. W2 tel 020 3675 7750. I am not a fan of Bayswater as a venue but am happy to go to this delightful restaurant and anyway it is Notting Hill really. Though so hard to get in as it is small but intimate. Superb cooking. P
- 17 Orrery – 55 Marylebone High St. tel 020 7616 8000. Delightful cooking and one of my favourite D&D restaurants above the Terence Conran shop in Marylebone. Lovely area to wander round and walkable to the west end too even though out of the way. Unusual and perfect setting.
- 18 The Ritz – 150 Piccadilly, W1 tel 020 7493 8181. Hard to miss out because it's always so smart (jackets required) and a real occasion in one of the finest dining rooms in Europe.
- 19 Riva – 169 Church Road, Barnes SW13, tel and fax 020 8748 0434. Another excellent Italian with a real emphasis on the cooking and obviously very local. Dull interior but food makes up for it. Excellent fish and pasta and Truffles are the best around mid to late October. P
- 20 River Café – Thames Wharf, Rainville Road, W6 tel 020 7386 4200. **Expensive but beautifully cooked Italian food with the best ingredients and a particular favourite for lunch on a sunny day. A late tale for dinner to be avoided. Only 2 tables for 6 which always get booked up. Sunday lunch. Always a buzz. Amazing desserts. Gets its critics but packed every night. Service is excellent. P**
- 21 Roka – 37 Charlotte Street, W1, tel 020 7580 6464. Near the Charlotte Hotel and obviously quite central. Very like Zuma and obviously based upon this, but although the food is as good if not better and the service is excellent, the atmosphere isn't quite as good. It's not as spacious, it's rather bright, but excellent. The grill is fantastic. 3 other London locations too.

- 22 Rules- 35 Maiden Lane WC2 Tel 020 7836 5314. Yes, it is for tourists but how they love it and with cause. Covent garden, old fashioned, historic even. A lot of wonderful meat dishes, always the first port of call for some American friends.
- 23 Scott's – 20 Mount Street, W1 tel 020 7495 7309. Also, Richard Caring who owns le Caprice, The Ivy, **J Sheekeys**, Daphne's in Draycott Avenue SW3, the list goes on and on and he used to own Wentworth Golf Club too. It is just such a wonderful restaurant. I am usually tempted by the king of fishes, turbot, and you get wonderful service and great food and a feel-good lunch or dinner, albeit at a price.
- 24 J Sheekys - 33-35 St Martin's Court, tel 020 7240 2565. Simply the best fish restaurant in town and oh so handy for the theatre. Open early and late.
- 25 The Square – 6 Bruton Street, W1 (off Bond Street), tel 020 7495 7100, fax 7495 7150. Expensive, elegant – fabulous food. Wonderful truffled mashed potato, if someone else is paying. Modern and confident. A few too many “suits”?
- 26 Sushi Samba - Heron Tower 110 Bishopsgate EC2. Tel 020 3640 7330. Had to include this restaurant because a) it is an amazing view including the lift up to it b) it is in the same footprint as my old office (knocked down but I worked there for 5 years, next to Liverpool St station really) c) I know the owners and d) it is an incredible experience. They owned but have now sold the Duck and Waffle pub above it too, great breakfasts. A must see for visitors but book ahead.
- 27 Tamarind Kitchen, Soho – 167-169 Wardour Street, London W1F 8WR, tel 020 7287 4243. Great location in Soho. South Indian dishes, sharing plates, most enjoyable and innovative and well worth a visit.
- 28 **Tamarind of Mayfair – 20 Queen Street, London W1J 5PR, tel 020 7629 3561. This was the first Indian restaurant to win a Michelin star and has now expanded after a refurbishment (autumn 2018) and quite exceptional cuisine. Nothing short of superb through Head Chef Karunesh Khanna and thoroughly recommended.**
- 29 The Wolseley, 160 Piccadilly, W1, tel 020 7499 6996. Can it really be as long ago as 2004 this busy restaurant was opened by Corbin & King, the men originally behind Le Caprice and the Ivy. By Green Park tube and the Ritz. Needs to be booked but excellent food and worth a visit. Open all day including breakfast (my favourite meal there).
- 30 Yauatcha – Broadwick House, 15-17 Broadwick Street, W1, tel 020 7494 8888. Dim sum specialities at Hakkasan like Soho restaurant. Good for a group visit. Great cooking. Funky design. Book for downstairs as there is less of a spotlight though I still prefer **Zuma** to all the other Japanese restaurants.
- 31 Zaika – 1 Kensington High Street, London W8 5NP, tel 020 7795 6533. Modern Indian cuisine and part of the Tamarind collection. Quite a history. Moved from Chelsea a few years ago and now opposite Kensington Gardens. Went to being called One Kensington and non-Indian back to great and creative Indian cooking again. A wood panelled former bank building with wonderful charm and excellent cooking focusing on northern India with influences of Mughal and Nawabi, so rich in flavour and fragrantly spiced dishes. P
- 32 **Zuma – 5 Raphael Street, SW7, tel 020 7584 1010. Like Nobu in Park Lane but much better. Not just Japanese food but a wide variety and a nice bar area. Opposite Harrods although quite**

hard to find. Always fun for lunch or dinner. Very friendly and good for people watching. Buzzy people watching place. Sushi is fantastic (try the Seabass) and though expensive it's not Araki! Go early, 6.30/7 pm works well, for a "cannot book" place for two at the bar and enjoy watching the busy professional chefs. P

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- 33 About Thyme – 82 Wilton Road, London SW1, tel 020 7821 7504. Excellent food and wine, nice atmosphere and excellent service according to one of my work colleagues and well worth a visit to this modern European restaurant in Pimlico. P
- 34 L'Amorosa – 278 King Street, W6 9NH. Tel 020 8563 0300. Up market but casual and inexpensive Italian, a welcome 2015 edition to my local favourites. Excellent short but clever menu mainly pasta dishes. Upper level tables preferred. P
- 35 Bocca di Lupo – 12 Archer Street, tel 020 7734 2223. Italian tapas near Piccadilly Circus, Excellent.
- 36 Chez Bruce – 2 Bellevue Road, Wandsworth Common, SW17 7EG, tel 020 8672 0114, fax 8767 6648. An extremely popular local restaurant, two minutes' walk from Wandsworth Common and a few minutes from Balham. Easy going atmosphere and how could a restaurant with excellent beef with béarnaise sauce and hot chocolate pudding go wrong? Consistently excellent. P
- 37 Ciao Bella – 86-90 Lambs Conduit Street, WC1N 3LZ, tel 020 7242 4119. Fun family Italian close to Russell Square tube station and the good traditional Italian food is good value. P
- 38 Cibo – 3 Russell Gardens, W14, tel 020 7371 6271. Innovative and excellent Italian cooking just by Olympia, off Holland Park Road. Amazing internal decorations, massive and colourful dinner plates, homemade pasta, good fish and wonderful Italian wines. A favourite but sometimes lacking in atmosphere early/midweek. Good for lunch and summer evenings (ask for the table near the entrance). Service can be mixed. P
- 39 Cicchetti 215 Piccadilly W1 Tel 020 7494 9435. Ok I like Italian food and ok this is not the very best in town. But it is good and the location is just fantastic right by Piccadilly Circus tube and walkable from Green Park. I find I go there quite a lot and am happy to recommend it. It's the best location and service of this chain.
- 40 Fat Boys - (BYO!) 10a Edensor Road, W4, tel 020 8994 8089. This is very local to us. Near the Riverside Sports Centre and is a very informal Thai restaurant and is open on Sunday evening when we usually visit. Good food. You can sit outside on a sunny evening and good for parking. P
- 41 Franco Manca – 144 Chiswick High Road, W6 tel 020 8747 4822. Fantastic pizza and near me so a good spot to check out. Part of a chain of course e.g. also in Richmond but not a bad thing when the blueprint is good and it is. P
- 42 Geales - 2 Farmer Street, W8 tel 020 7727 7528. My favourite Notting Hill fish and chips. P

- 43 The Glasshouse – 14 Station Parade, Kew, Surrey TW9 tel 020 8940 6777, fax 8940 3833. Owned by same people who run The Square, Chez Bruce and now La Trompette. Prices still very good and the cooking and service is excellent. It is situated right next door to Kew station and parking is easy (once you find it the street is a dead end). Very popular. P
- 44 Golden Hind – 73 Marylebone Lane, W1 tel 020 7486 3644. My favourite fish and chip restaurant (edging out Lisson Grove) though sadly no longer BYO. Often a stop before getting the train from Marylebone up to Wembley or on the way back! P
- 45 Il Portico – Kensington High Street, W8, tel 020 7602 6262. **This is one of my very favourite restaurants. It is not for special occasions but very friendly and family owned/oriented. (James) They tend to book in people they know, as it gets very crowded. It is in Kensington (near the former Kensington Odeon cinema) and serves excellent Italian homemade pasta and fresh Dover Sole. Reliable. Parking a few hundred yards West of the restaurant is ok, single yellow lines. P.**
- 46 Indian Zing – 236 King Street, W6 tel: 020 8748 5959. **Excellent service and one of the (if not the) best Indian restaurants in London and it's a few hundred yards walk away which helps. Very special. P**
- 47 Osteria Basilico – 29 Kensington Park Road, W11, tel 020 7727 9957. Great for children. Simple Italian cooking but you have to book. Don't expect to be treated like royalty but good fun upstairs fewer but nicer tables. P.
- 48 Potli- 319 King St W6 tel 020 8741 4328. Almost up there with Indian Zing as one of the finest Indian restaurants in London and also local to me, fantastic. Innovative.
- 49 The Royal China Club – 40-42 Baker Street, tel 020 7486 3898. It's very convenient and easy to book (although one should) and a reliable place to go for a decent Chinese meal if you are not keen on picking one in Chinatown or want to go on a Sunday. P
- 50 Rosa's Victoria- 25 Gillingham St SW1V IHN tel 020 3813 6773. Simple cooking, short menu, great service, small but friendly space, wonderful stopping off point near Victoria though not for a special occasion/ dinner. Also consider Aster (more fine dining, D and D restaurant) or Toza's (larger restaurant easy going Italian) or **About Thyme** all nearby if you want to meet in Victoria/ Pimlico area. It works for me as the Victoria line meets the District and Circle line 5 minutes from all 4 restaurants. All P (less so Aster).
- 51 Saigon Saigon 313 King St W6 tel 020 8748 6887. My only Vietnamese on the list because it is excellent and local to me and I love it. P
- 52 Sagar – 157 King St, Hammersmith, W6 tel 020 8741 8563. Vegetarian Indian, vegan friendly cheap, excellent, good service. Not for a first date but delicious. P
- 53 Tosa – 332 King Street W6 tel 020 8748 0002. A really good Japanese cafe with unlimited green tea, a wonderful chicken yakitori, very near me and cheap as chips, but not as unhealthy. Discount for cash. P
- 54 La Trompette - 5-7 Devonshire Road, Chiswick, W4, tel 020 8747 1836. On the old site of La Dordogne, which was a wonderful French restaurant but you'd never know it had been there the

change is so complete. Wonderful value for such fine cooking. Be ready for 3 courses. It really is a West End restaurant with Chiswick prices. P

- 55 Le Vacherin - 76 South Parade, North Chiswick, W4, tel 020 8742 2121. On the site of Riso RIP, how along was that now? Anyway, very French and traditional. Enjoyable and good value if not as excellent as in the early days. Baked Vacherin to die for. P
- 56 Yoshino – 3 Piccadilly Place, W1, tel 020 7287 6622. A small Japanese cafe near Piccadilly and excellent sushi as well as (in the less expensive section) good value.
- 57 Zucca – 184 Bermondsey Street, tel 020 7378 6809. I sometimes stop here on the way back from a concert at the O2 when I want somewhere that's near the City but not in it as I love Italian restaurants. It was open on a Sunday but now closed and on Mondays. Must be doing well and certainly you have to book. P