

Tim Russell's 50 recommended London restaurants

I have had the opportunity of doing 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 favourite restaurants onto my website in case it assists you in choosing a night out in town. So here it is and any feedback more than welcome. The restaurants have been set out in alphabetical order and split between the more expensive and the less expensive although I accept most are for special occasions. **Bold** type means it's a particular favourite and **P**, means reasonable parking after 6.30pm. 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 **Assaggi** – 39 Chepstow Place, W2, tel 7792 5501. One of the most difficult Italian restaurants to get into in London because it doesn't seat many people. It is very informal but the service is very friendly and the food is quite excellent (from my favourite Pecorino starter to the sea bass) in this Bayswater Italian above a pub. 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**
- 2 Aubergine - 11 Park Walk, SW10, tel 7352 3449. Well worth a visit. Friendly and great food. You need to book this excellent Fulham(ish) restaurant well in advance. Memorable touches.
- 3 **Le Caprice** – Arlington House, Arlington Street, SW1, tel 7629 2239. It isn't too expensive but isn't cheap either. You 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 a particular favourite and very good for pre and post theatre meals. The cooking is excellent and very consistent with an eclectic menu based upon brasserie type food. The standards are very high 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 Sunday lunch. **© 8.30pm**
- 4 China Tang – The Dorchester, Park Lane, London, W1A 2HJ, telephone 7629 9988. This excellent MSG free Chinese restaurant is the talk of the town and its great food (try the Pork Dim Sum, Lemon Chicken and real Peking Duck) is more than matched by the art deco surroundings. On my first trip there Carol Caplin and (separately before rumours start!), Philip Green were on nearby tables along with a bevy of beautiful women and (shock horror) slightly older guys. The Dorchester (go to the end of the lounge bar area and turn left for the restaurant) is a superb venue. If someone else is paying it's a number one choice! Plenty of taxis on departure and diners were still coming in at 11pm. Book early and tables 40 or 42 best for eg 4 people.
- 5 Cipriani – 25 Davies Street, tel 7399 0500. 2004 opening. Really great atmosphere and full of wealthy young (well at least the women are!) Italians. Enjoyable and well worth a visit. You usually get put in the back room unless you are a VIP or ask for the (more glitzy and enjoyable) front room.
- 6 Clarke's – 124 Kensington Church Street, tel 7221 9225. Great cooking from Sally Clarke, a no-choice menu in the evenings but sophisticated food. The good news is that you can now get them to fax you the menu for the week, so there's less risk of a disappointing "choice". Try and book upstairs. Great for weekend brunch.
- 7 Club Gascon – 57 West Smithfield, tel 7796 0600. Lots of fois gras and a good location for the City. The food is served "tapas" style but is very good if you are not too hungry. Service not always great. There is a great bar next door. Try Le Cercle as well (1 Wilbraham Place) its new twin with an excellent bar, just off Sloane Square, tel 020 7901 9999.

- 8 Le Gavroche – 43 Upper Brook Street, tel 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 on a recent visit 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 required. **P**

- 9 Gordon Ramsey – 68 Royal Hospital Road, SW3 4HP, tel 7352 4441. **Gordon Ramsey did of course used to be at Aubergine (see above), which was ranked No. 1 London restaurant by most guides in 1998. Then he left to go to his own restaurant on the site of the old Tante Claire. His empire grows but the food here is better than Claridge's Hotel and without the pomp and circumstance that can be expected in some of the so-called "exclusive" and sometimes more formal restaurants. P**

- 10 Hakkasan – 8 Hanway Place, W1, tel: 7927 7000. Very near to Tottenham Court Road tube though tucked away location. Very atmospheric with a great lounge/bar area. Innovative, oriental food. Restaurant design the best selling point though.

- 11 The Ivy – 1 West Street, WC2, tel 7836 4751. The Ivy has been around forever. Great pre or post theatre. Loads of famous people go there but it is the classic menu that brings you back for more. The service is excellent although has on recent occasions disappointed. The restaurant is not as formal as Le Caprice, it is opposite Stringfellows and a must to visit. Your mother will love it too (but not the lapdancing at Stringfellows opposite the restaurant!). Harder to book than it is to park which is saying something.

- 12 Kensington Place – 201/205 Kensington Church Street, W8, tel 7727 3184. A really busy restaurant near Notting Hill Gate. A good place for a fun evening.

- 13 Kilo's Kitchen – 3 to 5 Mill Street, W1, tel 76298877. Why change the name from Noble Rot which I loved along with one of the best bars in town with wonderful dancing (members only but you can still get in) til late Friday and Sat ,Heart of Mayfair. Good restaurant, fun place. **P**

- 14 Locanda Locatelli – Churchill Hotel, 8 Seymour Street, W1, tel 7935 9088. **This is the excellent spin off by the chef (Giorgio Locatelli) from Zafferanos and is very difficult to get into but got an amazing 5 stars from A A Gill (see the comment under Petrus below). Sometimes not atmospheric but if you have time to book ahead this is an Italian worth trying to get into.**

- 15 Petrus – Berkeley Hotel, Wilton Street, SW1, tel 7235 1010. **Now moved from St James' Street. Wonderful French cooking, very smart dining room and a little on the formal but a good wine list as you would expect and well worth a visit. A A Gill has given Petrus 5 stars will as far as we know is only the second time he has ever done this with the other occasion being Locanda Locatelli. One star is far more common! You have to be in the mood and feeling flush but when you are this or Gordon Ramsey is the one. P**

- 16 River Café – Thames Wharf, Rainville Road, W6 9HA, tel 0871 223 8076. One of only two Michelin star restaurants in Hammersmith (the other is Indian Zing (see below)). Quite expensive but beautifully cooked Italian food with the best ingredients and a particular favourite for lunch on a sunny day.

- 17 Roka – 37 Charlotte Street, W1, tel 7580 6464. Very near the Charlotte Hotel and obviously quite central. Very like Zuma and obviously based upon this, but although the food is almost as good and the service is excellent, the atmosphere isn't quite as good. It's not as spacious, it's rather bright, but still excellent.

- 18 The Square – 6 Bruton Street, W1 (off Bond Street), tel 7495 7100, fax 7495 7150. Expensive, elegant – fabulous food. Wonderful truffled mashed potato, as long as someone else is paying. Modern and confident.

- 19 **The Wolseley**, 160 Piccadilly, W1, tel 7499 6996. A new restaurant in 2004 opened by Corbin & King, the men behind the Caprice and the Ivy. Needs to be booked but excellent food and worth a visit. Open all day including breakfast.
- 20 Yuatcha – Broadwick House, 15-17 Broadwick Street, W1, tel 7494 8888. Dim sum specialities at Hakkasan like Soho newcomer. 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 pretenders.
- 21 **Zafferanos** – 16 Lowndes Street, SW1, tel 7235 5800. It depends on what sort of evening (or lunch) you are looking for but we think this is one of the best Italians in London. It has been around since 1996 and is fairly formal but easy to get to (just off Sloane Street at the Knightsbridge end), great food and great parking. You need to book well in advance but they will only take bookings 1 month ahead on busy evenings so this helps. Particularly recommended (less expensive) for lunch. P
- 22 **Zuma** – 5 Raphael Street, SW7, tel 7584 1010. Like Nobu but more friendly and less expensive. 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. Better than (still excellent) newcomers including Roka. P

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- 23 **Adam Street** – 9 Adam Street, WC2, tel 7379 8000. I go to Adam Street quite a lot as members there but you don't have to be members to go for lunch or dinner and it is well worth a visit, good value with a fun bar and very useful for the City. Excellent value set menu. A young crowd and a great wine list. P
- 24 Andrew Edmunds - 46 Lexington Street, tel 7437 5708. This is a fun restaurant in Soho. Great atmosphere and good food. A young crowd.
- 25 Le Café du Marche - 22 Charterhouse Square, Charterhouse Mews, Smithfield Market, EC1, tel 7608 1609. One of the best places in the City and a lovely location in Charterhouse Square. Excellent for lunch and dinner, very relaxed. Good French food and one of the most recommended City restaurants .P
- 26 Carluccio's – 12 West Smithfield, EC1, tel 7329 5904. Simple Italian but fun and quick service. No booking for lunch so try and get there early. Obviously part of their larger chain and not a special occasion restaurant but reliable. There is now one near me in Chiswick.
- 27 Chez Bruce – 2 Bellevue Road, Wandsworth Common, SW17 7EG, tel 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? Replaced the Ivy recently as London's top restaurant according to Hardens, amazing stuff! P
- 28 **Chez Kristof** – 111-115 Hammersmith Grove, W6, tel: 8741 1177. On the site of Marquis, another new French restaurant which is well worth visiting. A good atmosphere and the cooking gets better and better. P
- 29 Ciao Bella – 86-90 Lambs Conduit Street, WC1N 3LZ, tel 0871 075 3984. Fun Italian close to Russell Square tube station and good traditional Italian food is good value.
- 30 Cibo – 3 Russell Gardens, W14, tel 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/mid week. Good for summer evenings (ask for the table near the entrance). Service can be mixed or would be a "bold" recommendation. P

- 31 **E & O** – 14 Blenheim Crescent, W11, tel 7229 5454. Good service, unusual food and a real buzz. Another hit for the Notting Hill area. I always really enjoy a meal there and the critics rave as well. P.
- 32 **Fat Boys** - (BYO!) 10a Edensor Road, W4, tel 8994 8089 (follow the signs to the Pier at Chiswick). 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
- 33 **La Famiglia** - 7 Langton Street, tel 7351 0761. A fun Italian just off the West End side of Kings Road. Always busy. A great terrace outside when sunny. Good and fun food. P.
- 34 **The Glasshouse** – 14 Station Parade, Kew, Surrey TW9 3PZ, tel 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 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. Just got a Michelin star. P
- 35 **Il Portico** – Kensington High Street, W8, tel 7602 6262. This is one of my very favourite restaurants. It is not for special occasions but very friendly hostesses. They tend to book in people they know, as it gets very crowded. It is in Kensington (near the 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 in the newly extended congestion zone! P.
- 36 **Indian Zing** – 236 King Street, W6 tel: 8748 5959. Excellent service and one of the best Indian restaurants in London and it's a few hundred yards walk away which helps. Very special. One of only two Michelin star restaurants in Hammersmith.
- 37 **Langan's Brasserie** – Stratton Street, WC1, tel 7493 6437. You can always find something you like on this menu. Downstairs for the soufflés and upstairs for the lovely (preferred) Venetian room. Relaxed and large famous institution. There is a real buzz about the place and the service has improved a lot lately. Always lots on the menu you could choose. P
- 38 **La Poule Au Pot** - 231 Ebury Street, SW1, tel 7330 7763. A very romantic French restaurant in Pimlico of all places. Always a great atmosphere.
- 39 **Metrogusto** - 13 Theberton Street, Islington, N1, tel and fax 7226 9400 and 153 Battersea Park Road, London SW8, tel 7720 0204, fax 7720 0888. This restaurant known as "MG" started off in Battersea (now closed) and is very Italian as well as being very friendly and informal. The food is quite excellent and well worth a visit. Not open for lunch.
- 40 **Osterica Basilica** – 29 Kensington Park Road, W11, tel 7727 9957. Great for children. Fun Italian cooking but you have to book. Don't expect to be treated like royalty but they now accept credit cards so things are looking up. Good fun. P.
- 41 **Pissarro's** – Corney Reach Way, W4, tel 8994 3111. Five minutes walk from me along the river in Chiswick. A relaxing venue and particularly good for lunch and early dinner. Also very nice in the summer looking out onto the river. P
- 42 **Ricardos** – 126 Fulham Road, SW3, tel 7370 6656, fax 7244 6401. An unusual Italian with a lot of choice and a restaurant to choose widely in "starter portion" size. Informal but friendly and booking rarely essential which makes it a good "spur of the moment" choice.
- 43 **Riva** – 169 Church Road, Barnes SW13, tel and fax 8748 0434. Another excellent Italian with a real emphasis on the cooking and obviously very local. It is busy even when Hammersmith Bridge is closed. Excellent fish and pasta and Truffles are the best around mid to late October. P

- 44 San Remo – 195 Castlenau, SW13 tel: 0208 741 5909. One of our favourite local Italian restaurants with an excellent selection and for me a short walk over Hammersmith Bridge. Great for lunch.
- 45 Sheekys - 28-32 St Martin's Court, tel 0240 2565. Same owner as The Ivy and Le Caprice for good or bad! Improved theatre and (great) fish restaurant.
- 46 Simpsons - 100 Strand, tel 7836 9112. Simpsons has to be on the list because it is such an amazing and traditional place. It is suitable for breakfast and extremely long lunches, Yorkshire pudding and a few of the "boys" enjoying a very full afternoon in one of two of the Simpsons bar as well as four or five hours in the restaurant itself. Sponge pudding and custard is usually a must along with a jacket and tie and no post-lunch appointments! I always go here or the Oxford and Cambridge Club (crusty but great) in Pall Mall for Christmas lunch.
- 47 La Trompette - 5-7 Devonshire Road, Chiswick, W4 2EU, tel 0208 747 1836. On the 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. Hard to book especially now everyone knows about it. You have to go for the 3 courses. It really is a West End restaurant with Chiswick prices. P
- 48 Vacherin - 76 South Parade, North Chiswick, W4, tel 8742 2121. On the site of Riso, which we always liked but has not (sadly) survived. Very French and traditional. Really enjoyable and good value and wonderful gastronomic evenings. Baked Vacherin to die for and getting better and better as settles into the local area.
- 49 Zaika - 1 Kensington High Street, tel 7795 6533. This is (for good or bad) Michael Winner's favourite Indian in town. Its moved from Chelsea recently and maybe lost some of the atmosphere but still great and creative cooking. P