



4/26/04 Visit Britain: British Restaurants, from Quirky to Classic, Win High Praise in Global Survey

Accolades from the world's top chefs and food writers are giving fresh momentum to the growing reputation of Britain's creative and innovative restaurateurs. Now, according to an international survey conducted by Restaurant Magazine, more than a quarter of the world's top 50 restaurants can be found in England.

The London-based trade magazine recently asked more than 300 of the world's leading restaurateurs, chefs and food writers to pick their favorite places to eat, taking into consideration fine food, service, location and ambience.

The top 50 choices, revealed in London on April 20, include 13 English restaurants, nine of them in the top 25 on the panel's list, the strongest showing yet in the annual survey. They represent a wide variety of styles from fine dining to casual and their cuisines include British, French, Italian, Chinese and Japanese. Nine of the restaurants are in London and the others are in the English countryside.

Top among the English restaurants, at number two on the overall list, is The Fat Duck, in the small town of Bray, on the River Thames near Windsor, west of London, where chef owner Heston Blumenthal is acclaimed for his inventive and experimental dishes, such as bacon-and-egg ice cream, snail porridge and sardines on toast sorbet. The largely self-taught Blumenthal was awarded a third Michelin star earlier this year. In the magazine survey, which is co-sponsored by Penfolds Wines, his restaurant is also named "Best Newcomer to the List" and "Best European Restaurant."

Two London restaurants are among the top ten choices: Nobu, in the boutique Metropolitan Hotel in the Mayfair district, which features modern Japanese dishes; and Restaurant Gordon Ramsay, which focuses on modern French cooking and is the only restaurant in the British capital with three Michelin stars.

Other London favorites include Le Gavroche, a classic fine-dining French restaurant in Mayfair; The Ivy, a fashionable haunt in the theater district, and the quirky, cult eatery St. John, in the Smithfield area, which specializes in distinctive variations on classic British fare.

Other picks in the top 25 on the list include Alan Yau's Hakkasan, in the West End, the only Chinese restaurant in Britain with a Michelin star; Michel Roux's Waterside Inn, Bray, a near-neighbor of The Fat Duck and also the holder of three Michelin stars; and Merchant House, a 22-seat restaurant run by chef-patron Shaun Hill in the country town of Ludlow, Shropshire, near the English border with Wales.

The top 50 list also includes The Square, Mayfair, which concentrates on modern French dishes; The Wolseley Café and Restaurant, Piccadilly, which only opened in late 2003

and is modeled on a classic Viennese café and patisserie (also winner of the “Editors’ Choice” award); Raymond Blanc’s Le Manoir Aux Quat’ Saisons, a country house hotel near Oxford; and River Café in the Hammersmith district in West London which specializes in authentic and simple Italian dishes.

At the awards ceremony, Thom Hetherington, marketing director of Restaurant Magazine, said the survey highlighted the “*eclectic yet outstanding*” variety of restaurants “*which makes London such a fabulous city to eat out in.*” For more information on the list, which also included 13 restaurants in France and eight in the USA, go to: www.restaurantmagazine.co.uk.

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