



RESTAURANTS

By Jo Caird

Grill Room at the Café Royal

BALTHAZAR LONDON

Taking its inspiration from the acclaimed New York restaurant of the same name, this new Covent Garden brasserie has something for everyone. Enjoy classic French bistro cuisine all through the day, from breakfast to dinner, via lunch and afternoon tea. Seafood is a particular speciality and don't miss the succulent steaks. As in New York, the next door Balthazar Bakery keeps the restaurant stocked up with fresh artisan breads and pastries, as well as offering sandwiches and salads to take away. At the weekend, hearty brunches are the order of the day.

4-6 Russell Street, WC2B 5HZ
020 3301 1155

BURGER & LOBSTER

It's a simple concept – the non-printed menu comprises burgers and lobsters, either steamed, grilled, or served in a brioche roll – but it

works, as the roll-out of the fourth Burger & Lobster in the capital goes to show. The newest restaurant, in the City of London, offers the same superlative cocktails and generous portions as the other London diners, served informally by the super friendly staff on paper-lined metal dishes. The cuisine may be uncomplicated – this is still fast food after all – but it's also beautifully done. No reservations are taken, so be prepared to work up an appetite as you wait for a table.

GRILL ROOM

The Café Royal has been one of London's most iconic venues since its launch in 1865, hosting the likes of Oscar Wilde, Virginia Woolf and Noël Coward over the years. With its recent reopening as a luxury hotel has come another exciting

change: the transformation of the Grill Room into a Champagne and cocktail lounge befitting the venue's illustrious history. Sipping a glass of vintage Champagne and nibbling on a platter of seafood, I was in my element, distracted from my feasting only by the room's opulent décor. This venue has been the place to be seen for over a century now and with this reopening, it appears that nothing has changed.

68 Regent Street, W1B 4DY
020 7406 3333

HKK

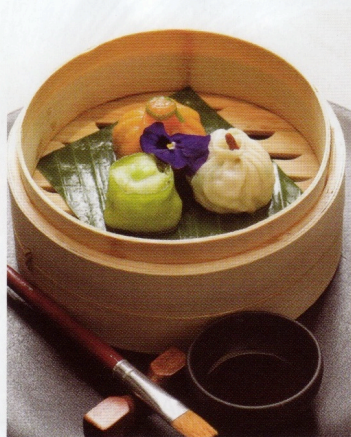
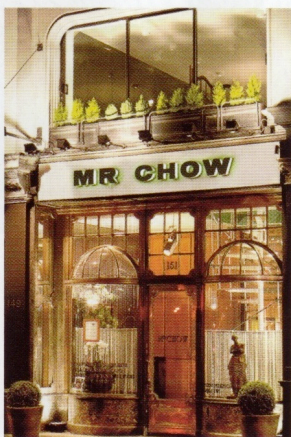
The latest offering from the team behind Hakkasan, this new eatery in the heart of the City of London offers a 15-course tasting menu of Cantonese delicacies at dinner, with a reduced menu of a mere eight courses at lunch. From the minute you walk into this serene space, you're struck by the wood-fired duck

oven, the stunning centrepiece of the open kitchen. But if the oven is impressive, the dish that emerges from it – lychee wood-roasted Peking duck served with sesame pancakes – is even more so. It's just one of many highlights from the extraordinary feast that can be enjoyed here.

Broadgate West, 88 Worship Street, EC2A 2BE
020 3535 1888

MR CHOW

This year marks the 45th anniversary of one of London's best-known Cantonese restaurants, a dining institution that has since put down roots in Los Angeles, New York and Miami. Its walls lined with modern art from the collection of founder Michael Chow, this is an elegant place for lunch or dinner and is almost always full, popular with both Knightsbridge locals and visitors to the area. Try the tender beef fillet in oyster



CLUBS & BARS

Top: Burger & Lobster. Left: Mr Chow. Right: HKK

The Vaults at Voltaire

sauce or ask the friendly staff for their recommendations when it comes to more daring dishes such as squid ink tagliatelle.
151 Knightsbridge, SW1X 7PA
020 7589 7347

THE MALT HOUSE

Fulham has become the next phase in Michelin-starred chef Claude Bosi's domination of London's dining scene. First came Hibiscus in Mayfair (which has recently undergone a major refurbishment to create a new interior and development kitchen) and now The Malt House marks Bosi's move into the world of the gastropub – and about time too! My short ribs of beef, served with pickled red cabbage and horseradish were divine and my companion's pollock with pumpkin was fishy perfection. There's a bar menu too, with classic British snacks such as Welsh rarebit with rhubarb chutney, and,

unusually among pubs, it's open for breakfast.
17 Vanston Place, SW6 1AY
020 7084 6888

NEIL RANKIN AT JOHN SALT

To this Islington eatery, known for its innovative approach, comes a brand new menu courtesy of Neil Rankin of Pitt Cue Co. fame, one of 2012's hottest London restaurants. The focus is on fresh fish and grills, with cross-cultural delights such as Korean-style raw beef with pear and sesame making this an excellent choice for adventurous diners. Classic dishes such as whole coal-baked crab with bisque butter won't disappoint those with less brave palates. Order small plates to share, or go straight for the mains, but make sure to save room for the sumptuous desserts.
131 Upper Street, N1 1QP
020 7359 7501

APARTMENT 58 CENTRE POINT

The latest members' club in town launched at Centre Point tower during London Fashion Week in February and it's proving just as à la mode as you'd expect. Spread over 8,000 square feet and four storeys, the club is a home from home for creative types, offering sublime workspace as well as excellent drinking and dining facilities. The late-licensed ground floor eatery, with its decadent street food menu, is also open to the public.
101 New Oxford Street, WC1A 1DB
020 7135 2058

OPIUM COCKTAIL AND DIM SUM PARLOUR

Opium is famously addictive, but perhaps not as addictive as the luxurious dim sum we consumed in the opulent surroundings of Chinatown's

funkiest new veuø. Entering through a secret door, you find an interior inspired by the opium dens that used to fill this area, with nine themed rooms begging to be explored. And the innovative cocktails? We can report that they're just as moreish as the food.
15-16 Gerrard Street, W1D 6JE
020 7734 7276

THE VAULTS AT VOLTAIRE

Located in the atmospheric vaults beneath a Grade II-listed building in the City of London, Voltaire offers the ultimate in sophisticated socialising. Sat in our own private alcove, we were free from interruptions as we sampled cocktails from the extensive list and admired the interior décor. The bar boasts the capital's largest collection of Pommery Champagne, and the al fresco cigar terrace is an added bonus.
New Bridge Street, EC4V 6DB
020 7438 8059