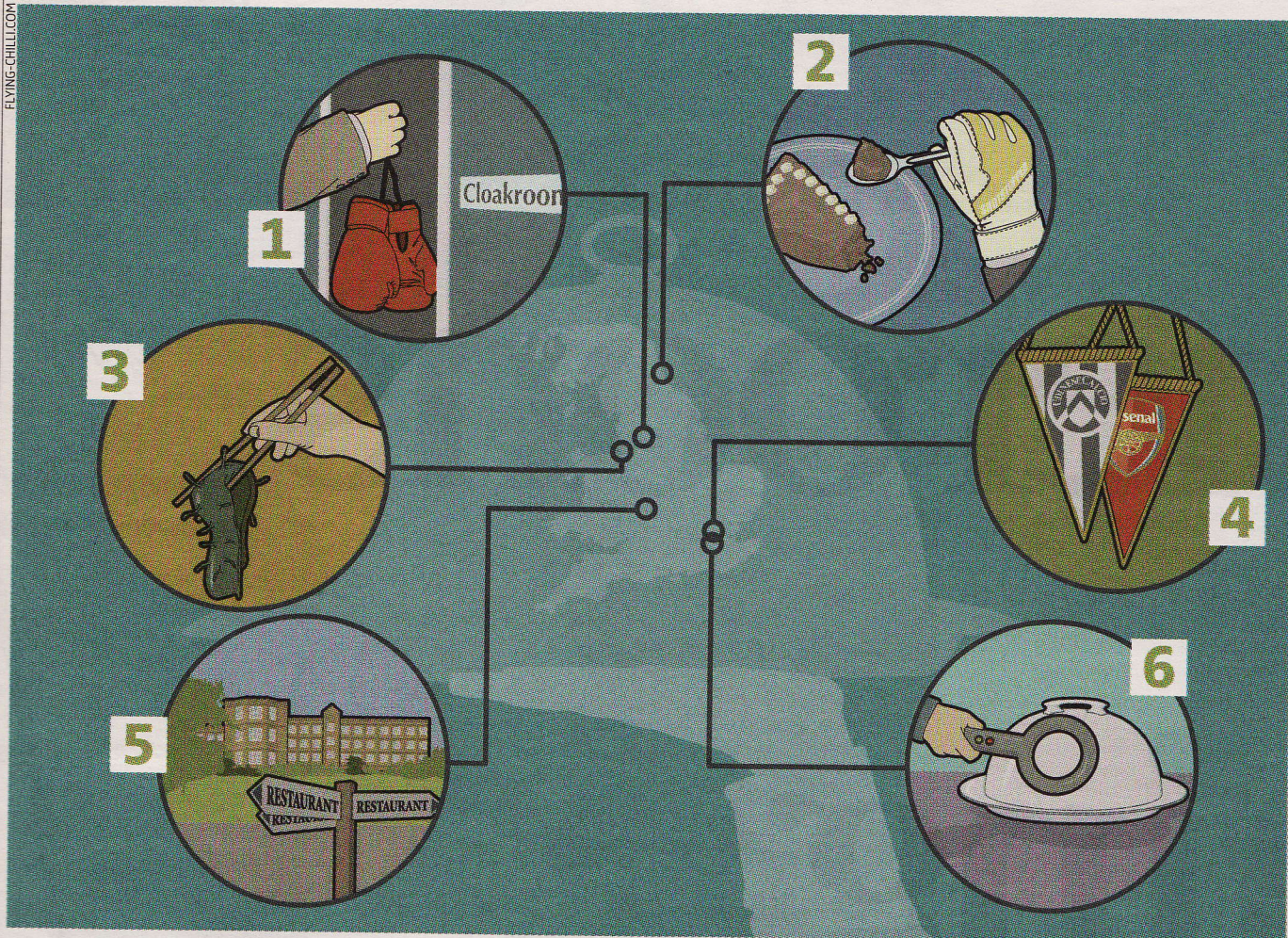


Welcome to...

footballers' favourite restaurants

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For football players, restaurants aren't just places to eat food, but also the venues for shady deals, fist fights and, most importantly, posing. Here we round up the Premiership's hottest culinary picks

1 Panacea Manchester The house rules of this swanky eatery include "no shouting, clouting or raucous behaviour" – which makes it unfortunate that it is where Wayne Rooney threw a punch at Blackburn defender Michael Gray, reportedly for asking Rooney's fiancée Coleen McLoughlin to join him for a threesome. Now boys, do try to behave...

2 Café 21 Newcastle Football players have been visiting this Quayside haunt for years. Formerly the Michelin-starred 21 Queen Street, it is now a much simpler affair, with a modern brasserie feel. Newcastle United's goalie Shay Given has been spotted here feasting on the bistro's famed desserts.

3 Shangri-la Liverpool This up-market Chinese restaurant is famed for its unusual gastronomic offerings, including braised sea slugs. Liverpool's Steven Gerrard used to be a regular but, after his fiancée was arrested following an alleged assault on another girl here earlier this month, he may prefer to cook his sea slugs at home for the time being.

4 San Daniele del Friuli London N5 The friendly owner may be a staunch Udinese fan, but that doesn't stop him from welcoming Arsenal's players and high-profile fans, including Melvyn Bragg and Nick Hornby, with open arms. A five-minute walk from the Gunners' old home and 10 from their new one, this place will be a favourite for years to come.

5 The Grove Hertfordshire This enormous luxury hotel and spa is a stone's throw away from both England's and Arsenal's training grounds, making it a convenient spot for a post-kickaround bite to eat. There are also three separate restaurants, which is handy if Ashley Cole is eating there.

6 Portal London EC1 This Portuguese restaurant is a favourite of Jose Mourinho and the stars in his Chelsea team, despite the fact that a listening device was recently found hidden there. Portal now employs a private security firm to keep the place bug-free, so Mourinho and pals are once again free to discuss tactics or "tap up" whomever they like. *Joanna Caird*