

SIXPACK

ZEREN WILSON is an award-winning UK restaurant reviewer and wine consultant. He also has his own website: bittenandwritten.com



- 1 **SORREL**
77 South Street
Dorking, Surrey
RH4 2JU
- 2 **BARATXURI**
10 Square Street
Ramsbottom, Bury
BL0 9BE
- 3 **FIEND**
301 Portobello Road
London W10 5TD
- 4 **THE COVE**
53 Waites Lane
Fairlight, TN35 4AX
- 5 **THE WOOLPACK INN**
Church Lane, Warehorne
Ashford, Kent, TN26 2LL
- 6 **LISBOETA**
30 Charlotte Street
London W1T 2NG



Pork cheek with apple and langoustine sauce at Sorrel.

WHAT'S HOT?

A Michelin-star in Dorking, Basque cooking in Ramsbottom, fiendish creativity in Portobello Road, seasonal East Sussex food, pub grub nirvana in Warehorne and Portuguese pleasure in Fitzrovia. Here are our restaurant picks in the UK.

SORREL Dorking, Surrey



Sorrel's dining room is housed in a beautiful historic building in Dorking.

1 Steve Drake is a chef I have followed for many years since encountering his cooking at Drake's in Ripley, where he held a Michelin star for 14 years. A former Roux Scholarship winner, his CV is a glittering roll call of top restaurants from the last 25 years, including Chez Nico at Ninety Park Lane and L'Arpège in Paris. Sorrel opened in 2017, housed in a beautiful 300-year-old Grade II listed building and former girls' school, the finest building in Dorking. The timbered low-ceilinged room provides instant warmth and charm, the mere 40-something covers inside delivering tranquillity with which to enjoy supremely assured cooking. A visit may feature dishes such as turbot with mussels in Gewürztraminer, grilled lettuce and 'turbot head sauce', a strip of translucent *dashi* jelly draped over the top like a cloak of umami –

seriously 'cheffy' cooking, subtle and intelligent, yet always delivering big flavours that jive against each other. The current menu shows off a starter that sings from the page; hand-dived scallop, crushed apple, turnip miso, Ortiz anchovy and turnip leaf oil. Or how about blueberry ice-cream, lavender cake, oregano and homemade ginger beer? Thought-provoking, often surprising, always delivering. A tartlet of Barkham Blue cheese lingers vividly in the memory, a one-bite morsel with rosewater gel and tarragon, an echo of Turkish Delight snapping the synapses. Likewise, a slab of duck breast slicked with a date glaze and Moroccan spices, served alongside a cloud-like meringue filled with its liver. Some of the most thrilling, creative and engaging cooking in the UK, a mere 50-minute train journey from London.

RANKING

	Food	50	of 50
	Service	20	of 20
	Wine List	18	of 20
	Ambience	10	of 10
	TOTAL	98	of 100

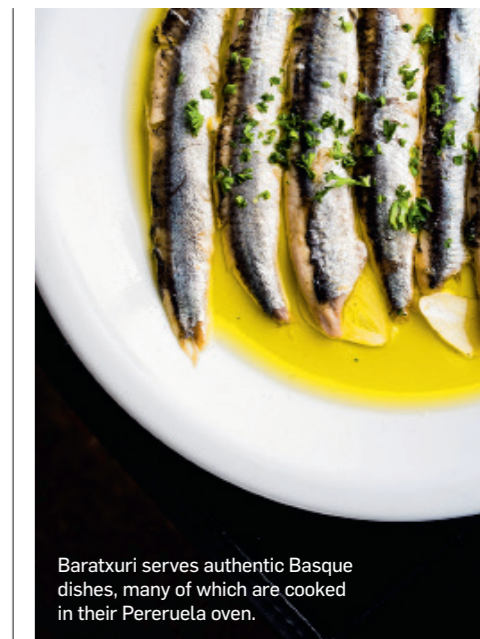
SORREL

77 South Street
Dorking, Surrey
RH4 2JU
+44 1306 889414
sorrelrestaurant.co.uk

BARATXURI Ramsbottom, Bury

2 The Basques officially call their language *Euskara*, a pre-Indo-European language that is one of the oldest in Europe. With a load of unexpected Xs, Ks and Zs, we're looking at a lingo that looks magical and mysterious. Baratxuri may be hard to pronounce, but boy does it merit a visit to the tiny old mill town of Ramsbottom, at the foot of the Pennines. Joe and Lisa Botham opened their first tapas restaurant, Levanter, in 2014, followed by Baratxuri next door. Joe has the added intrigue of being a flamenco guitar player and teacher, having spent time in Granada honing his skills – and learning from the local Andalusian grandmothers how to cook over fire. Several visits offer a cavalcade of highlights. *Txangurro de la Donostia* is a buzz, a wickedly buttery dish of Basque-style spider crab rice, to be devoured while poring over the line-up of *pintxos* on the bar, the *txotx* toothpicks

jammed into bites ranging from Getaria anchovies and *jamón*, oozy-centred tortilla, to pristine *gilda* of pepper, olive and anchovy. *Txistorra* sausage rolls sit on the bar ready to be cooked to order, as are slabs of Galician Blond Rubia Gallega *Txuleton* beef, waiting to be cooked in the wood-fired, purpose-built Pereruela oven, the first of its kind in the UK. More? *Carabiñero con Arroz*, a lurid orange fat monster prawn on bomba rice black with squid ink, cooked over embers; Galician empanada of tuna and clam, gorgeous flaky pastry; Ibérico cheeks collapse into themselves at the touch of a fork, dark brooding pucks of gelatinous meat; and a whole leg of suckling lamb from Segovia. There's a gutsy earnestness to the cooking, as if you've just wandered into a *pintxo* bar in San Sebastián. There can be no higher praise.



Baratxuri serves authentic Basque dishes, many of which are cooked in their Pereruela oven.

RANKING

	Food	50	of 50
	Service	19	of 20
	Wine List	18	of 20
	Ambience	9	of 10
	TOTAL	96	of 100

BARATXURI

10 Square Street
Ramsbottom, Bury
BL0 9BE
+44 1706 559090
baratxuri.co.uk

Photos: Eddie Judd Photography, Scott Rhodes / Bacononthebeech.co.uk

FIEND Notting Hill, London



Fiend serves up an array of dazzling flavour combinations and a carefully chosen wine list.

3 Some menus crackle with energy and feisty creativity from the moment they land on the table – this is how things kick off when sitting down at Fiend. Chef Chris Denney’s menu has an enthralling allure that sets the pulse racing even before the first plates come out of the open kitchen, a dazzling array of influences that tiptoe across the world to deliver the kind of fireworks and flavour combinations that leave the diner gasping for more. We settle for the remarkably keenly priced set-lunch (£19 for three courses), while still feeling the urge to dabble with some of dishes on the main menu. Beginning with a supremely silky and ethereal chicken liver parfait and perfectly formed brioche, deeply savoury slices of mutton salami, and mackerel tacos, we’re ready for a riotous rollercoaster of an afternoon. There’s lamb heart *agnolotti* in a

snappy mustard *dashi*; salt-baked celeriac with mushroom and pistachio granola, smothered in velvety hollandaise; olive-fed duck leg with *tosazu* fennel and Tropea onion, a thrill to suck the delicate meat off the bone; jerk spiced cod with red chicory and fiery scotch bonnet, a nod to the Caribbean-community influence of the Ladbroke Grove/Notting Hill nexus where the restaurant sits. Veal sweetbread with *bulgogi* and sake marinated loquat is another belter. A deserved word for the razor-sharp wine list carefully chosen by sommelier Beth Bricken-den. It’s a joy to segue from Melsheimer’s Mosel Riesling to Rieffel’s Alsace Pinot Blanc, then into the mouth-watering Baden Pinot Noir from Claus Schneider – a worthy foil for the whirligig of flavours. Fien-dishly creative from start to finish: a restaurant that is the epitome of its name.

RANKING

	Food	48	of 50
	Service	19	of 20
	Wine List	20	of 20
	Ambience	9	of 10
	TOTAL	96	of 100

FIEND

301 Portobello Road
London W10 5TD
+44 2039 718404
fiend-portobello.com

THE COVE Fairlight, Hastings

4 When a community pub has been closed for six years, its reopening is something to be celebrated and cherished by the locals. Reinvigorated by chef Henry David and his partner Olivia Loveridge, The Cove sits in the picturesque village of Fairlight, a spot which was a gift from William the Conqueror to the first Anglo-Norman aristocrats after he was crowned king in 1066. A smart refurbishment echoes the black weatherboarded panels of the iconic fisherman’s net huts in nearby Hastings, a bright and airy interior maintaining the essence of a pub yet showing culinary intent with a snappy selection on the black-board: *spätzle cacio e pepe*; porchetta toastie; courgettes *farinata*; Skrei cod; chicken *piccata*; pork schnitzel. Lekker squid with sambal mayonnaise and sorrel features bouncy tender squid, delicately battered amidst a tumble of sorrel, to be dredged through that perky mayo. A direct relation-

ship with suppliers comes to the fore with two exceptional wild venison dishes “hunted by Arthur in his woods”. The smoked tartare carries a subtle whisper of smoke, allowing impeccable meat to shine through, studded with capers, alongside pickled cucumber and topped with the yolk of a pullet egg. Venison *osso buco* is a revelation. Chunks of lovingly slow-cooked meat falling away from the bone, with mushrooms and a zesty grating of gremolata, the bone offering up its nugget of marrow to be slurped through the hole, for those that appreciate this thrill. It’s a ‘high five’ dish. Notable mention must go to the *Bitterballen* from the top of the menu, this snack a nod to Olivia’s Dutch heritage. On our visit these fried gems contained the goodness of wobbly piggy bits, made from porchetta, and a fiery nose-tingling mustard.

RANKING

	Food	47	of 50
	Service	18	of 20
	Wine List	15	of 20
	Ambience	10	of 10
	TOTAL	90	of 100



Smoked venison tartare and pullet egg at The Cove.

THE COVE

53 Waites Lane
Fairlight, TN35 4AX
+44 1424 814772
thecovefairlight.co.uk

THE WOOLPACK Warehorne, Kent



Woolpack diners can tuck into great food.

5 Discovering pubs in beautiful rural settings offering fantastic food is one of my great pleasures. A 16th century Inn in Warehorne, opposite the stark beauty of St. Matthews church, with Romney Marsh sheep grazing outside, fits the Platonic ideal. A proper inglenook fireplace greets guests as they walk in, with plenty of cosy nooks and crannies to settle into with a pint of local cider or perhaps a glass of Kentish sparkling wine from Gusbourne or Simpsons – English sparklers are now *de rigueur* on all drinks’ menus, happily sat alongside Champagne. The food here has ratcheted up several notches since Marcin Szelka – also executive chef of owners The Rocksalt Group – recently took over the kitchen, delivering thrilling cooking that has me dashing back each time I see a new dish shared on Instagram. I’ve been wowed by

plump cutlets from a rack of Kentish lamb, tricked out with some lamb fat confit carrots, mint oil and pickled walnuts, a generous plateful with just the right amount of artistic flourish – hearty pub food. Pig cheeks with buttery turnip purée and fried turnip tops, wickedly decadent, soothingly comforting: a charmer. Another visit finds me sitting in front of the fire with a slab of monkfish on the bone, nestled amongst mussels, fennel and sea vegetables, a deeply flavoured *bouillabaisse* sauce speaking of long-simmered crustaceans and fish bones, worthy of being slurped or mopped up to the last drop. Five bedrooms upstairs offer the opportunity for the perfect scenario: a country walk, a few pints of local ale, a restorative pub dinner, a short stagger up creaky 16th century stairs, and a soak in a roll-top bath before bed – pub nirvana.

RANKING

	Food	48	of 50
	Service	19	of 20
	Wine List	16	of 20
	Ambience	10	of 10
	TOTAL	93	of 100

THE WOOLPACK INN

Church Lane, Warehorne
Ashford, Kent, TN26 2LL
+44 1233 732900
woolpackwarehorne.co.uk

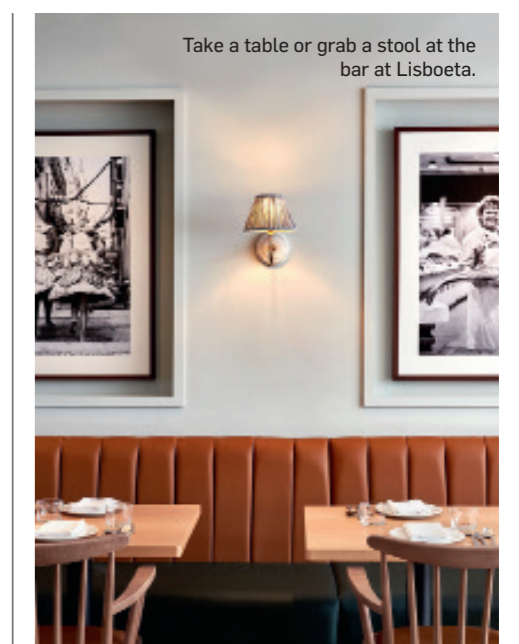
LISBOETA Fitzrovia, London

6 Nuno Mendes is a Lisbon-born chef who has commanded a loyal following since landing in London in 2006 and leading the kitchen of experimental pub Bacchus, which had the tagline ‘fine dining in trainers’, before opening his own spot, Viajante, and quickly gaining a Michelin star. Lisboaeta is his self-proclaimed ‘love letter to Lisbon’, showcasing all that he holds dear about his home city. Let’s start with the *Vindalho Empada*, a Goan-spiced pork pie that is a joyous first bite, delicately spiced with meltingly-soft pastry. Or how about *Morcela e Lingueirão*, blood sausage and tender razor clams on a thin slab of toast: top draw snacking and well-suited for grabbing a stool at the bar and exploring the intriguing 100 percent Portuguese wine list, many of which are imported directly from wineries. *Petiscos* small plates offer delicacy via cured Amberjack fish from the Azores, meaty slabs in a happy muddle

of orange and onion, a cleansing few bites amidst the opening salvos. *Bacalhau à Brás* finds a slab of salted cod under a flurry of matchstick fried potatoes and creamy scrambled eggs, the happiest riff on fish & chips with a Portuguese accent. Alentejo-style smoked beef tartare is another highlight, as is the impeccably cooked *Plumas de Porco Preto*, rosy-pink slivers from acorn-munching black pigs, layered across raw tomatoes, onions and a generous slug of olive oil. “This is the first thing I want when I go home, with a really cold beer,” Nuno tells us. Step forward the Grandstand Dish, the one to have the jaws dropping and knees knocking: *Arroz de Marisco*, a bowlful of *Carabineiro*, huge scarlet prawns, squid and other flavours of the sea, the heads plated separately to be sucked or gnawed. Glorious and memorable.

RANKING

	Food	49	of 50
	Service	18	of 20
	Wine List	19	of 20
	Ambience	9	of 10
	TOTAL	95	of 100



Take a table or grab a stool at the bar at Lisboaeta.

LISBOETA

30 Charlotte Street,
London W1T 2NG
+44 2038 309888
lisboeta.co.uk