

# Restaurants



*A switch in nationality results in bellissimi Radici. By Jeremy Wayne*



**R**einventing a restaurant is a bit like reinventing yourself. So much baggage to shed, new swagger to adopt and friends to acquire. But over in Islington, the smart French restaurant Almeida has morphed effortlessly into a new Italian one, **Radici**.

At Radici's helm is Francesco Mazzei, the chef with Heathcliff looks who strides his kitchen like a lion but whose nature is as sweet as a lamb's, while David d'Almada (the Arts Club and Sartoria) is responsible for the design. Simple tables and carefully mismatched chairs give the restaurant a 'primary-school chic' look and the blue-hued earthenware will make you nostalgic for the Italy you fell in love with on your gap year.

I wouldn't bother with a cocktail. Despite the bar being in the very capable hands of bartender Simon Caporale, and despite the fact that Italy can lay

**HOW MUCH**  
£120 for two, including wine  
**WHAT TO EAT**  
Umido di baccalà, cavatelli with Calabrian sausage, anything with 'nduja, tiramisù  
**WHAT TO DRINK**  
Southern Italian whites and reds  
**WHO GOES**  
Sam Mendes, Indra Varma

claim to the negroni, Americano and martini, it's true that Italians don't drink – other than wine, that is. (I once asked an Italian guest if he'd like a drink. 'No thanks, I'm not thirsty,' came the reply.) I'd go instead for one of the resinous Calabrian whites or sunny Pugliese reds.

But I'm getting ahead of myself – what you need to know about is the food. The menu is relatively small, but the standouts are umido di baccalà (salt-cod stew) with potatoes, flawlessly cooked cavatelli with Calabrian sausage

and prawns (think surf 'n' turf of the south) and, from a list of five or so pizzas, a hot Calabrese with 'nduja and chilli.

God, of course, is in the detail, and some of the details need sorting out. The restaurant gets very noisy. Even the tolerant denizens of Islington were complaining the night we visited. And orders were muddled. This and other minor misdemeanours were dismissed with a shrug by our otherwise charming Italian waiter, as if to say there are more important things to worry about in life. It would be hard to disagree.

Radici does a wondrously light pistachio cake and a cracking Marsala tiramisù. The best tiramisù in the world – long before this Italian pudding became the parody of itself it is now – was served at Caffè Orientale in Venice, which was neither a café nor oriental, and in any event is long gone. And although I usually decry any kind of liquor in tiramisù, Radici's is so good it's reason enough to visit.

*30 Almeida Street, N1 (radici.uk).*



UMIDO DI BACCALÀ AT RADICI



## SIDE ORDERS

### ULI

*5 Ladbroke Road, W11 (ulilondon.com)*

Locals were gutted when Uli on All Saints Road suddenly shut up shop a couple of years ago. Now, loyal fans Adam Wilkie and Graham Rebak, along with founder Michael Lim, have relaunched it. Small but perfectly formed, it offers accessible dishes like Szechuan chilli prawns – entry-level Asian cooking, but no less delicious for that.

### PATTY & BUN

*14 Pembridge Road, W11 (pattyandbun.co.uk)*

There are now nine Patty & Buns across London, the latest in Notting Hill. Their burgers, with names like the Portobello 'Dig It' Mushroom Burger or the 'Lambshank Redemption' are not for the faint of heart: they're big, bold and ballsy. The Patty & Bun people also mix a wicked margarita and play very cool music.

### SIX PORTLAND ROAD

*6 Portland Road, W11 (sixportlandroad.com)*

This 20-month-old Holland Park bistro from Terroirs Group alums Oli Barker and Pascal Wiedemann is utterly adorable – local as local gets, in Holland Park, but it's worth crossing town for the sheer loveliness of it. White tablecloths, a daily dated menu, broadly European cooking plus wonderful natural wines, Oli's pride and joy.



## THE BARFLY Clarette

People keep telling Mr Barfly that wine bars are all the rage again, so off he trots to recently opened Clarette in Marylebone. Launched by France's top restaurant consultant, Natsuko Perromat du Marais, and Alexandra Petit-Mentzelopoulos, the



youngest daughter of Château Margaux owner Corinne Mentzelopoulos, this place is the business. So much so that Mr Barfly is giving up hard spirits for good (ie, until Monday).  
*At 44 Blandford Street, W1 (clarettelondon.com).*



# TATTLER<sup>®</sup>

## RESTAURANT GUIDE 2018





**YAUATCHA**

15-17 BROADWICK STREET,  
W1F 0DL (YAUATCHA.COM;  
020 7494 8888)

Many claim that Yauatcha is the very best place in London for dim sum, and we would probably say the same. Try them once and you will never forget the taro croquettes or the venison puffs, so light they practically need to be weighted down. And drinking oolong tea here mid-afternoon, when Yauatcha morphs into a tea house, you can almost imagine yourself in rural China – it's that authentic. And the family is growing: the new restaurant in the City joins two in the USA and four in India, while coming in 2018 is an outpost in Saudi Arabia. **£££**

**ULI**

5 LADBROKE ROAD, W11 3PA (ULI  
LONDON.COM; 020 3141 5878)

Fans of the minuscule Uli Chinese/Asian on All Saints Road were gutted when it shut a couple of years ago. Two of them, Graham Rebak and Adam Wilkie, decided to relaunch the restaurant, along with founder Michael Lim. It's small but smart and an outdoor terrace adds space. With accessible dishes like Szechuan chilli prawns and crispy shredded beef alongside Thai and Malaysian faves, this is 'entry level' Asian cooking, which is precisely what makes it so yummy. **££**

**CHAI WU**

87-135 BROMPTON ROAD, SW1X 7XL (HARRODS.COM; 020 3819 8888)

We love this Harrods restaurant. The Ladies' Lunch menu is £70 for five small courses, and a lobster dumpling dim sum will set you back £21 (although it is topped with beluga), but we all need to spoil ourselves once in a while. And here's a nice surprise – excellent inflation-beating cocktails, including a lychee Chai Wu martini for only a tanner. Plus, a little-known fact – this is the only food outlet in Harrods with its own loos. That's cachet. **£££££**

**MEI UME**

10 TRINITY SQUARE, EC3N 4AJ (MEIUME.COM; 020 3297 3799)

In principle we're opposed to a combined Chinese/Japanese restaurant. However, in the case of Mei Ume, at the cracking new Four Seasons hotel, we make an exception – because it's so damn good. On the Japanese side, barbecue wagyu is the real deal and there's a live sushi station. But the Chinese menu – from ex-Royal China chef Tony Truong – gets our vote for pure refinement. Stir-fried Dover sole with cloud ear mushroom and celery and braised pork belly with crab were both standouts when we ate there. **££££**

**PARK CHINOIS**

17 BERKELEY STREET, W1J 8EA (PARKCHINOIS.COM; 020 3327 8888)

The first thing to know about Alan Yau's Mayfair restaurant, inspired by the golden era of French chinoiserie and with more than a nod to old Hollywood glamour, is that it's beautiful. The second is that the live jazz is so good, the vibe so smoochy, it should have an X certificate – the world's first X-rated restaurant. And the third is the food. Dish after ambrosial dish, like wild turbot with taro and dried shrimp, washed down with Ruinart, the house champagne and one of our faves. **££££**

**CHINA TANG**

53 PARK LANE, W1K 1QA  
(CHINATANGLONDON.CO.UK;  
020 7629 9988)

As we went to press, news reached us of the untimely death of China Tang's founder, the extraordinary Sir David Tang. Only he could have created a restaurant where the Cantonese food would satisfy the most discriminating diner and an environment where the Sultan of Brunei, Kate Moss and Kanye would all feel equally at home. We love this swellegant place, and will always think of Sir David when we're here. **£££££**

**MIN JIANG**

ROYAL GARDEN HOTEL, 2-24  
KENSINGTON HIGH STREET,  
W8 4PT (MINJIANG.CO.UK;  
020 7361 1988)

If you're used to dining in grand, hotel-based Chinese restaurants in Asia, you will feel right at home in Min Jiang, located on the top floor of the Royal Garden Hotel. Service is slightly formal and clipped, the lighting a touch (only a touch) too bright, but the main event – the food – is sublime. The star dish is Beijing duck in two servings, the second with a choice of four preparations. No matter what you eat, though, you'll eat like an emperor. One Chinese mogul we know of comes straight from Heathrow, then eats lunch and dinner here every day of his week-long stay. **££££**

**CHINESE**